

*Refugee Crisis and Local Responses: An Assessment of Local Capacities to Deal with Migration Influxes in Istanbul**

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Although Turkey has been gradually transforming into a country of asylum, its legislation concerning refugees is inadequate to guarantee the fundamental rights and basic needs of this population, such as accommodation, health-care, and employment. However, following legal modifications effected in 1994 and 2013, persons from non-European countries have been allowed to apply for “temporary asylum” in Turkey. Currently, almost 90% of the Syrian refugees in Turkey live in different Turkish cities, while Istanbul is hosting the highest number of out-of-camp Syrians (as opposed to those who live in refugee camps). The aim of the article is to analyse the legal and administrative framework in Turkey dedicated to providing assistance to

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refugees at the local level. For this purpose, the experiences of three lower tier municipalities of Istanbul, namely Zeytinburnu, Sultanbeyli, and Sisli, will be described, and their capacity and need to deal with the crisis they were faced with will be assessed.

Keywords: Syrian refugees, Istanbul municipalities, local capacity

1. Introduction

Although Turkey has been gradually transforming into a country of asylum due to the civil war in Syria, legislation concerning refugees is inadequate to guarantee the fundamental rights and basic needs of this population, such as accommodation, healthcare, and employment. On 29 August 1961 Turkey signed the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, with both “time” and “geographical” limitations, which prevented non-European asylum-seekers from being granted refugee status. The new Law on Foreigners and International Protection adopted on 4 April 2013 preserved the geographical limitation. However, persons from non-European countries have been allowed to apply for “temporary asylum”.

The temporary asylum status meets some basic needs of this group of refugees. Those living in camps have access to education, water, food, shelter, and health services. However, the others may benefit only from the right to free healthcare and medication if they are registered. Consequently, the non-camp populations living in cities have exerted considerable pressure on the municipalities of these cities, which have had to face an unprecedented crisis.

The aim of the article is to analyse the legal, administrative, and technical capacities of Turkish local administrations in providing assistance to Syrian refugees. In this context, the services delivered to Syrian refugees by the lower tier municipalities of Istanbul have been studied, with the aim of assessing their capacities, aptitudes, and shortcomings in facing this multifaceted challenge. The study is based on an analysis of legislation, reports, statistics, and existing literature, as well as semi-structured interviews with the representatives of the relevant departments of three municipalities. These are Zeytinburnu, which has the highest ratio of Syrian refugees (almost 9% of the population); Sisli, an opposition party af-

filiated municipality with 15,269 refugees; and Sultanbeyli, whose 20,192 Syrians represent the greatest refugee population on the Anatolian side.

2. Refugee and Asylum Policy in Turkey

Over the past several decades, Turkey has received refugees from nearby countries suffering from war and conflict; for instance, Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq. After the decline of the USSR, many people were also driven to search for work in the country (Icduygu, 2015, p. 4). When hostilities broke out in Syria in March 2011, Turkey adopted an “open door” policy and accepted Syrian citizens, in line with the principle of non-refoulement (Kirisci, 2013; Koca, 2015, p. 209). The number of Syrian refugees has grown exponentially to reach 2,963,636 as of 16 March 2017, according to the Ministry of the Interior.¹ Turkey is ranked third in welcoming the highest number of refugees in the world (UCLG – MEWA, 2016, p. 6).

However, Turkey presents an unusual case concerning its refugee policies, as immigration policies have been reluctant to legally recognise the immigration of people outside of “Turkish descent and culture”, despite recent and growing migration challenges (Icduygu, 2015, p. 5). In addition to the 1951 Refugee Convention, with its time and geographical limitations, in 1968 Turkey ratified the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and raised the time limitation. However, because the geographical limitation was retained, only people fleeing violence or prosecution in Europe could legally seek “refugee” status in Turkey. Turkey’s refugee policy for this period was centred on Europe and on the Western alliance. This was a period when, in close cooperation with the UNHCR, Turkey received refugees from Communist bloc countries in Europe, including the Soviet Union (Kirisci, 2003).

In 1994, Turkey introduced some legal changes via a new regulation, which retained the geographical limitation and started to grant “temporary asylum” to people from outside of Europe (Koca, 2016, p. 60). A new Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) was adopted on 4 April 2013. Consequently, after decades of developing management strategies by means of separate legislation, a holistic migratory legal framework was passed, attempting to formulate a coherent migration and asylum policy. The new law transferred the management of international protection from

¹ http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik

security forces to a civil authority, the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM) under the Ministry of the Interior (Memisoglu & Ilgit, 2016, pp. 2-3). The DGMM and its provincial branches became operational in 2015.

Aligned with the EU's 2001 Directive on Temporary Protection, the new law stipulates temporary protection in times of mass refugee influxes (Memisoglu & Ilgit, 2016, p. 7) and prescribes the integration of immigrants into the country, as well as treatment of asylum-seekers and irregular migrants in accordance with international norms (Icduygu, 2015, p. 6). The Turkey's "Directive on Temporary Protection" was adopted by the Council of Ministers and entered into force on 22 October 2014. The directive specifies the terms of protection, comprising the scope of temporary protection, the rights and obligations of persons under protection, the criteria for staying in the country, and the potential limitations of these rights. The directive retains previously guaranteed rights and approaches such as the open door policy, no forcible returns (non-refoulement), and registration with the Turkish authorities and support within camp borders.

As emphasized earlier, despite strong criticism, the new law retained the geographical limitation, which provided a legal base and precision for the temporary protection regime. Consequently, non-European refugees are allowed to stay in the country only temporarily (*sartli mülteci*: conditional refugee) until the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has made a decision regarding their asylum application and found a long-term solution. The solution is mostly limited to third country resettlement in the absence of the possibility of local integration or voluntary return (Biehl, 2015, pp. 57-58). If they are recognised as refugees, they are resettled in a third country with the support of the UNHCR. While the UNHCR and Turkey's Ministry of the Interior are evaluating their claim for refugee status, applicants are granted limited rights of access to health, education, and other social services, as well as to the labour market. But no clear rule has been decided on concerning the duration of temporary protection status (Icduygu, 2015, p. 5).

The geographical limitation is the reason why Syrians are not officially accepted as "refugees".² Legally, as non-European asylum-seekers they are eligible to seek temporary asylum status individually. Nevertheless,

² However, in the text we will refer to the Syrian population in Turkey as 'refugees', with reference to their humanitarian and social conditions.

the “temporary protection” status is also problematic because it does not ensure a foreseeable future for the Syrian population trapped in Turkey indefinitely (Ozden, 2013). The Turkey’s Directive on Temporary Protection “strengthened the legal framework for registered Syrians to access social services, including education, medical care, social aid, interpretation services, and the labour market. And yet, uncertainty about their future legal status persists, because Syrians cannot be granted refugee status in Turkey unless Turkey lifts its geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention” (Memisoglu & Ilgit, 2016, p. 8).

The current refugee policy has drawn substantial domestic and international criticism from human rights organisations as well as the European Union, which has recommended the removal of geographical limitation. The Turkish state has listed many reasons to retain these limitations, including domestic security considerations due to instability along its southern and eastern borders, as well as the probability of turning into a “dumping ground” for refugees (Biehl, 2015, p. 58). However, Turkey has been gradually transforming into an asylum country and this limitation is denying thousands of asylum-seekers international protection. Besides, only a small number of countries (like the United States of America, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia) accept refugees from Turkey, and this is only after many years of waiting during which Turkey assumes a very limited responsibility concerning the fundamental rights and basic needs of refugees such as accommodation, healthcare, and employment (Koca, 2016, p. 61).

In Turkey, the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (*Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı*, AFAD) and DGMM are the main central public institutions responsible for temporary protection, international protection, and all migration-related matters. Prior to 2014, the Turkish government responded to the Syrian migratory influx by establishing refugee camps. These camps were set up and managed by AFAD from the outset of the migratory influx (UCLG-MEWA, 2016, p. 7). However, in time the number of Syrians who have settled in the urban areas of Turkey has largely come to exceed the population in the camps. Only approximately 9% of the Syrian population is currently living in 25 camps located in southeast Anatolia, which means there are 256,038 Syrians in camps out of a total of 2,963,636 registered in Turkey as of 16 March 2017.³ The Turkish cities hosting the largest numbers of out-of-camp Syrians who

³ http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik

have temporary protection (TP) status are: Istanbul (478,350), Sanliurfa (419,770), Hatay (383,713), Gaziantep (329,596), Adana (150,271), Mersin (146,557), Kilis (124,397), and Bursa (106,538).⁴ Furthermore, many Syrian refugees who do not live in camps are not registered – as many as one third of urban refugees in Turkey, according to research conducted by AFAD in 2013 (2013, p. 21). Because registration is compulsory to gain access to services and protection, non-registered refugees may face extremely vulnerable conditions (Icduygu, 2015, p. 8).

Although new legislation has granted free-of-charge access to social services and work permits, the implementation of these measures is also problematic. The Ministry of National Education claims that out of the 850,000 school-age Syrian children in Turkey, up to 550,000 will be enrolled in schools by 2017–2018.⁵ In 2013, a national needs assessment highlighted the fact that only 60% of out-of-camp Syrian refugees were accessing health services and that 54% had difficulties accessing medication. Lack of information and the inability to communicate in Turkish are reported as the main reasons for this problem (UCLG-MEWA, 2016, p. 10).

Refugees who lack work permits or sometimes even legal status are obliged to work in the informal sector for very low salaries. Child labour and illegal activities have thus become major concerns regarding these populations. On the other hand, high unemployment rates and wage deflation in the labour market have been attributed to Syrian migrants and create hostility among host populations (Icduygu, 2015, p. 8). In both the education and the health sector Turkish citizens have reported suffering from strained social services, largely in the southeastern region of Turkey (UCLG-MEWA, 2016, p. 10).

3. Local Responses to Crisis: Istanbul Municipalities in the Face of the Refugee Crisis

Local and national policies dedicated to the integration of refugees are necessary to assure their inclusion and to maintain social cohesion. Access to rights and services and a dialogue with the local population are

⁴ http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik

⁵ <https://www.setav.org/suriyeli-cocuklarin-yillara-gore-egitim-verileri-ve-okullasma-oranlari/>

essential for refugees. In this context, local administrations have a fundamental role to play, although they often operate within a restricted competence framework and limited decentralisation. Nevertheless, their intervention is paramount for the inclusion of migrants, either by means of direct action or coordination of the various institutional actors and non-governmental actors, including the private sector, associative structure, and citizens in general (UCLG, 2016, p. 12).

Istanbul receives the largest proportion of out-of-camp Syrian refugees in Turkey. Syrians also constitute the most important group of refugees in Istanbul. Indeed, legal precautions are set up to safeguard and prioritise Syrians. Istanbul has a two-tier metropolitan municipality with an elected mayor. There are 39 lower tier municipalities,⁶ each of these with a locally elected mayor and council.

3.1. Major Challenges Faced by Local Administrations

Before evaluating the services delivered to Syrian refugees in Istanbul, it is necessary to underline three basic challenges faced by municipalities. The first challenge concerning the municipalities' actions *vis-a-vis* the refugee population refers to their legal grounds. There are no clear indications in any laws regarding the competencies and responsibilities of municipalities when it comes to refugees. However, these administrations, which have had to face an unprecedented and previously unexperienced crisis, do need a legal basis upon which to take the actions that will permit them to bring assistance to these populations.

Municipalities refer to art. 13 of municipal law no. 5393 that qualifies every person living within a city's territory (resident) as a "citizen" (*hem-sebri*), who is consequently entitled to take part in decision-making and to benefit from municipal services and aid. This 'citizenship' has been interpreted as a concept which also covers non-nationals and has created an opportunity and an obligation for municipalities to deliver services to refugee populations. Additionally, art. 14 stipulates that municipal services should be provided in the best possible manner and in closest proximity to disabled and elderly "citizens". Similarly, art. 38 authorises the mayor to set up a budget for social aid allocated to poor, deprived, and disabled people. However, because the law does not explicitly mention

⁶ Lower tier municipalities are called 'district municipalities', as they share the territories of administrative district divisions.

non-nationals, municipalities are concerned that the Court of Accounts may consider expenditures designated for non-nationals in the municipal budget as an offence against the law.

Another legal document that mentions municipalities is the LFIP. However, it prescribes a very limited role, which simply consists of making proposals and contributing to the DGMM's actions. Art. 96 and 104 of the law also entitle the DGMM to set up collaboration and coordination with public institutions, universities, local administrations, NGOs, the private sector, and international organisations.

The second important challenge concerning the municipalities' capabilities of dealing with the refugee population refers to the financial resources they deploy. There is no state fund transferred to municipalities with the aim of meeting the needs of refugees. Local administrations need to operate within their existing budgets to serve the incoming refugee population, which obviously creates a significant challenge for them. However, central government agencies and municipalities have developed some ad hoc bases for cooperation. Central government funds have been provided mainly through AFAD, the Turkish Red Crescent, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. For example, the Gaziantep metropolitan municipality received 6.83 million USD in special activity funds developed by AFAD (UCLG-MEWA, 2016, p. 21).

The third challenge refers to accurate information on the refugees hosted by municipalities. This is a two-faceted problem. On the one hand, a lack of reliable information regarding the Syrian population settled within a municipality's territory is a major challenge because the process is extremely dynamic and the numbers are constantly changing. On the other hand, there are also refugees who are not registered, and it is therefore almost impossible to determine their exact number. Moreover, local officials who already have significant concerns about the legal basis of their actions in delivering services to registered refugees are much more reluctant to give their support to unregistered refugees. Indeed, "[i]n order to ensure that all refugees are registered, and in this context, to encourage registration and better manage the process, municipalities have urged the central government not to provide services, by official or informal means, to persons who are not registered" (Erdogan, 2017, p. 77).

The lower tier district municipalities have difficulties in getting accurate and detailed information about Syrian refugees from central government institutions, although this is essential for them to plan services and develop their capacities. The General Directorate of Security keeps records of

Syrian refugees. However, there is no systematic exchange of information between different state agencies (districts) and municipalities. Even the Sultanbeyli municipality, which has reserved a floor for the coordination centre of the Istanbul Directorate of Migration Management within the refugee centre, has reported not having any access to information from there. Similarly, Sisli municipality officials claimed having trouble even getting an appointment with the District Directorate of Migration Management. The Directorate does not have enough personnel even though it was established four years ago, and is seemingly unable to overcome the difficulties of the assignment.

Consequently, some municipalities prefer to collect household-based records, including information about all areas of need, such as quality of the houses that refugees live in, school-age children at home, any disabled people, rent, and the cost of electricity and water (Sancaktepe, Bagcilar, Buyukcekmece, Gaziosmanpasa, Pendik, Sisli, and Umraniye) (Woods & Kayali, 2017, p. 18; Erdogan, 2017, p. 61). The Sultanbeyli Refugee Centre has a very impressive software system created with the support of a private research company and keeps extremely detailed information on the refugees, including their demands and needs, as well as the assistance provided by the centre.

According to the Ministry of the Interior, the number of Syrian refugees with temporary protection status stood at 478,350 by March 2017,⁷ whereas according to the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Migration Management, in November 2016 there was a total of 539,062 Syrian refugees in Istanbul – 478,850 in TP and 60,212 in pre-registration (PR). Taking into account that approximately 700 TP transactions per day are carried out in Istanbul, the number of Syrians in this city is estimated to be over 600,000 (Erdogan, 2017, p. 34).

⁷ http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik

Table 1: *Number of Syrian Refugees in Istanbul*

District	Population of district	Number of Syrians (TP)	Numerical rank	Ranking in the quality of life index	Ratio of Syrians to pop. (%)	Rank by ratio
KUCUKCEKMECE	761,064	38,278	1	12	5.02	8
BAGCILAR	757,162	37,643	2	28	4.97	9
SULTANGAZI	521,524	31,426	3	36	6.02	6
FATIH	419,345	30,747	4	5	7.33	4
ESENYURT	742,810	29,177	5	29	3.92	15
BASAKSEHIR	353,311	26,424	6	26	7.48	3
ZEYTINBURNU	289,685	25,000	7	18	8.63	1
ESENLER	459,983	22,678	8	35	4.93	10
SULTANBEYLI*	321,730	20,192	9	38	6.27	5
AVCILAR	425,228	19,554	10	27	4.59	12
ARNAVUTKOY	236,222	17,838	11	39	7.55	2
BAHCELIEVLER	602,040	17,710	12	15	2.94	19
GAZIOSMANPASA	501,546	17,709	13	33	3.53	16
SISLI	274,017	15,269	14	4	5.57	7
UMRANIYE*	688,347	14,858	15	23	2.15	23
KAGITHANE	437,942	14,216	16	22	3.24	18
GUNGOREN	302,066	12,727	17	24	4.21	13
SANCAKTEPE*	354,882	12,072	18	34	3.41	17
BEYOGLU	242,250	11,841	19	6	4.88	11
BAYRAMPASA	272,374	11,004	20	13	4.04	14
EYUP	375,409	10,779	21	9	2.87	20
BEYLIKDUZU	279,999	6,728	22	19	2.40	21
BUYUKCEKMECE	231,064	5,555	23	14	2.40	21
PENDIK*	681,736	4,951	24	17	0.72	30
TUZLA*	234,372	2,794	25	21	1.19	25
SILIVRI	165,084	2,375	26	32	1.43	23
CEKMEKOY*	231,818	2,309	27	31	0.99	27
MALTEPE*	487,337	2,230	28	10	0.45	34
BAKIRKOY	223,248	2,191	29	3	0.98	28
USKUDAR*	540,617	1,987	30	7	0.36	35
BEYKOZ*	249,727	1,947	31	20	0.77	29
KARTAL*	457,552	1,773	32	11	0.38	36
SARIYER	344,159	1,754	33	8	0.50	32
ATASEHIR*	419,368	1,436	34	16	0.03	39
KADIKOY*	465,954	650	35	2	0.13	37
CATALCA	67,329	428	36	30	0.63	31
BESIKTAS	190,033	277	37	1	0.14	38
ADALAR*	15,623	167	38	25	1.06	26
SILE*	33,477	166	39	37	0.49	33
TOTAL (TP)	14,657,434	478,850			3.26	
TOTAL (TP+PR)	14,657,434	478.850+60.812 539.062			3.67	

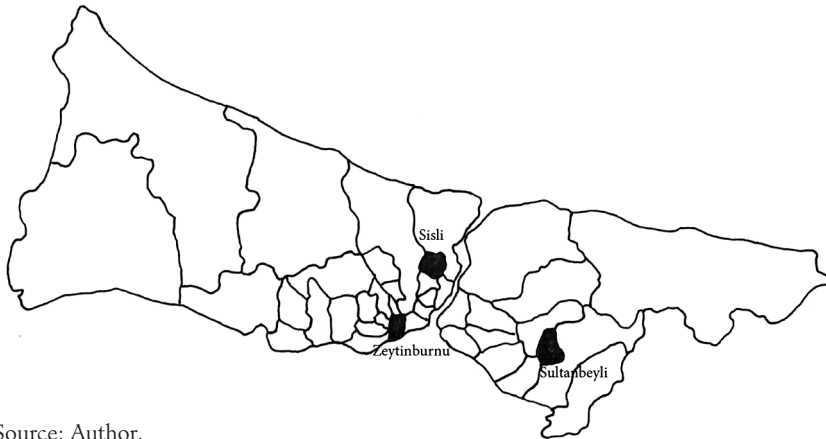
CROATIAN AND COMPARATIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

*Anatolian Side

Source: Author, based on Erdogan (2017, pp. 36-37) and Seker (2015, p. 9).

According to a study conducted by Erdogan (2017, p. 54), the first three districts with the largest number of Syrian refugees in Istanbul are Kucukcekmece (38,278), Bagcilar (37,643), and Sultangazi (31,426). The first three districts with the highest ratio of Syrian refugees to their total population are Zeytinburnu (8.63%), Arnavutkoy (7.55%), and Basaksehir (7.48%), which again are on the European side. The district with the most Syrian refugees on the Anatolian side is Sultanbeyli, with 20,192 people. This situation is also highly striking in terms of the speed of the refugee population increase in Istanbul. Unless refugee mobility between the provinces is brought under control and stabilised, it would not be a surprise if more than 25% of all Syrian refugees in Turkey were to end up in Istanbul in the near future.

Figure 1. Lower tier municipalities of Istanbul



Source: Author.

Syrian refugees have mostly concentrated in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Istanbul. Indeed, the lower tier municipalities that have the lowest quality of life are Gaziosmanpasa, Sancaktepe, Esenler, Sultangazi, Sile, Sultanbeyli, and Arnavutkoy. Zeytinburnu is a medium-level quality-of-life neighborhood, whereas Sisli has been classified in the highest level (Seker, 2015).

3.2. How are Municipalities Organised to Deliver Services to Refugees?

In Istanbul, lower tier municipalities deliver a range of services to refugees, whereas the metropolitan municipality is almost completely absent

from the field. This absence has also been pointed out by lower tier municipalities, which have emphasized their need for policy guidance and coordination, whereas the metropolitan municipality perceives the refugee issue more from a security and social assistance standpoint. In addition, “the municipalities tend not to perceive the situation as an urgent problem, because on the one hand there are legal obstacles and on the other hand the population of refugees is still less than 10% of the municipal population” (Erdogan, 2017, p. 69). However, the Zeytinburnu and Sultanbeyli municipalities take a rather forward-looking standpoint on this issue because they consider the Syrians living within their territory to be part of the permanent population. This is why the Zeytinburnu municipality has chosen the theme of “living together” for the coming two years. Similarly, the representative of the Sultanbeyli municipality has underlined that they consider serving Syrian refugees to be a conscientious obligation rather than a legal duty.

A large variety of approaches and actions concerning policies that refer to Syrian refugees has been observed among the lower tier municipalities of Istanbul (Erdogan, 2017, p. 40; Woods & Kayali, 2017, p. 18). The involvement of municipalities varies significantly. The size of Syrian communities within the municipality perimeters and the individual inclination of district mayors and officials largely determine the quality and scope of municipal intervention. The municipalities differ not only in their solutions but also in the choice of departments they assign to deal with refugees/refugee issues.

Nevertheless, some municipalities, such as Fatih, deliberately refrain from delivering services to refugees in order to avoid a negative reaction from the local people, as well as to avoid attracting more refugees to come and settle in their districts, which would stretch local capacities to meet their needs effectively. The refugees are seen as an extra burden because the central government has not allocated any financial support for this (Erdogan, 2017, p. 77; Woods & Kayali, 2017, p. 14).

Frequently, social assistance departments of lower tier municipalities carry out the services delivered to refugees. In some municipalities, several departments work together (Erdogan, 2017, p. 69). In Zeytinburnu, the Centre for the Support of Family, Women, and the Disabled (*Aile Kadın Destekleme ve Engelliler Merkezi*, AKDEM), created in 2007 under the Directorate of Social Assistance assures an important part of services delivered to refugees. Unusually, in Sultanbeyli it is the Strategy Department which manages and coordinates services for refugees. Although the Strategy Department has had no prior experience in this area, their expertise

in working with NGOs, conducting research, gathering and processing information, and establishing and maintaining relations with international organisations has reportedly helped them build their own approach and model of organisation.

The creation of a new subdivision to deal with refugees is not a common practice. However, in Zeytinburnu, shortly after the beginning of mass migration from Syria in 2011, a subsection titled “Integration into the City” was created under AKDEM. Similarly, in 2015 a Migration Unit was created under the Directorate of Social Assistance in Sisli. The two young officials of the unit consider this to be an indicator of the municipality’s enthusiasm to develop local policies on refugee issues, although it does not yet have a proper budget. They are currently preparing a programme to reclaim a share of the municipal budget and have solicited funds from the Prime Ministry’s disaster budget.

The most successful organisational structure seems to be the refugee centres created within the perimeters of some municipalities, namely Sultanbeyli and Sisli, on the initiative of these municipalities. Formally, there is no organic or administrative connection between municipality and centre. In order to avoid legal and administrative obstacles, an association or NGO creates a refugee centre and the municipality procures logistical support within the framework of a protocol signed between them.

Although Sultanbeyli is one of Istanbul’s financially weaker municipalities, it hosts an all-embracing and efficient refugee community centre, founded in 2014. A five-storey building has been organised in order to integrate all services available to refugees (legal counselling, aid in kind, health, education, and training). Even the central government’s Istanbul Directorate of Migration Management has a coordination office there. The centre has approximately 70 personnel, the majority of whom are Syrians. In Sultanbeyli, the Refugees and Asylum-Seekers Association (*Mülteciler ve Sığınmacılar Yardımlasma ve Dayanisma Derneği*) manages the refugee centre. However, the president of the association is one of the vice-mayors of the municipality and the head of the strategy department is a member of the board of directors.⁸ Hence, it is plausible to assert that the association is strongly controlled by the municipality.

In Sisli, the Refugee Solidarity and Support Centre (*Mülteci Dayanisma ve Destek Merkezi*) was established in October 2016, with contributions from the Refugee Solidarity Association (*Göçmen Dayanisma Derneği*)

⁸ See <http://multeciler.org.tr/hakimizda/yonetim-kurulu/>

and Expertise France. The centre has three employees: a manager, an Arabic-speaking doctor, and a Kurdish-speaking social worker. They also have a psychologist working on a voluntary basis. Contrary to Sultanbeyli, the Sisli Refugee Centre is based on a cooperative model connecting an NGO and a local administration, which assures the centre has a rather autonomous status. It is too early to say what kind of synergy will arise from the collaborative action between the local administration and NGO observed in Sisli.

Because local administrations do not have a proper budget and clear legal assignments to deal with refugees, collaboration with other government agencies and NGOs permit them to enhance their capacities to solve problems and increase the effectiveness of their service delivery. In Istanbul, almost all municipalities collaborate with the district governorate, Regional Directorate of Family and Social Policies, and AFAD. According to Erdogan (2017, p. 77), although most services are delivered directly by the means, capacity, and staff of the municipality, many services are carried out in cooperation with NGOs – some established upon the initiative of the municipality itself. NGOs also offer guidance to lower tier municipalities on where their services are needed. Nevertheless, Woods & Kayali (2017, p. 18) claim that cooperation between municipalities and NGOs in fact remains rare. Some municipalities (Kucukcekmece or Kagithane) have remained rather reticent about collaborating with NGOs. Sisli and Beyoglu, on the contrary, work with the Social Market Foundation, which collects donations in food, clothing, and household goods for people in need. UNHCR, *Butun Cocuklar Bizim Demegi* (All Children Are Ours Association), *Tarih Vakfi* (History Foundation), *Mülteci Haklari* (Refugee Rights), *Insan Kaynagini Gelistirme Vakfi* IKGV (Human Resource Development Foundation), and *Türkiye Aile Sagligi Planlama Vakfi* (Turkey Family Health and Planning Foundation) are other NGOs that the Sisli municipality works with. The Esenler municipality and the IKGV collaborate and exchange contacts. United Nations offices provide winter supplies in Esenyurt and *Insani Yardim Vakfi* (Humanitarian Relief Foundation) works in Uskudar (Woods & Kayali, 2017, pp. 16–17).

However, the Sultanbeyli municipality seems to have developed very effective collaboration schemes, especially with international organisations under the roof of the refugee centre. Thanks to the expertise and financial support assured by these organisations, it has been able to produce highly resourceful solutions in a highly proficient and professional manner in much more diverse fields. Indeed, German Welthungerhilfe and GIZ have provided 763,500 EUR in financial support for projects prepared by

the centre. Similarly, Handicap International has donated 440,000 EUR and the Sequa has contributed 650,000 TRY for an employment project. They also work with IMPR Humanitarian on employment issues and with some Dutch NGOs. Expertise France has financially supported the Sisli Refugee Centre.

These centres provide information, support, and translation services, organise language and cultural classes, and offer health services to refugees. They work not only with Syrians but also with other vulnerable refugee and migrant groups in the area. The creation of refugee centres and administrative units responsible for migration/refugee issues in at least some Istanbul municipalities may be considered responsive and proactive local actions. These actions should be reinforced by the legal and financial empowerment of local administrations in order to foster social cohesion and mitigate rising social tensions between refugees and host communities.

3.3. Services Delivered to Syrian Refugees

In Istanbul, services delivered to Syrian refugees vary noticeably from one municipality to another. The lower tier municipalities generally plan the services offered to refugees within the framework of emergency management and particularly within assistance to the poor and needy. However, a few municipalities do carry out well-developed, integration-oriented and longer-term programmes.

3.3.1. Assistance in Kind/Provision of Goods and Commodities

In general, local administrations simply integrate Syrians into existing services and outreach programmes such as donations of food or household goods within a scheme of assistance to poor and needy families. Most of them consider donation distribution to be a major way of helping refugees (Woods & Kayali, 2017, p. 14). Municipalities cannot offer direct financial support. Refugees needing cash or commodities are directed to Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations. However, some municipalities do attempt to meet the urgent needs of refugees, such as those concerning electricity, water, telephone, and school transport by means of citizen donations and contributions (Erdogan, 2017, p. 78). Many municipalities deliver special aid cards (credit cards) for basic needs such as bread, water, milk, and detergent. With these cards refugees may buy their daily supplies from contracted grocery stores/supermarkets, but cannot use

them in exchange for cash or to buy luxury products (Erdogan, 2017, p. 79). In addition, municipalities visit refugee families to investigate their living environment and to inspect their needs on the spot.

3.3.2. *Counselling Refugees About Their Rights*

Most municipalities have specialised in counselling and informing refugees about their legal and social rights, as well as the social services available to them. They act as facilitators when refugees wish to access public institutions for information and services, especially concerning health and education. They establish contact with the relevant institutions on an ad hoc basis, which may eventually turn out to be a regular practice and sometimes lead to the institutionalisation of social services.

In Sultanbeyli, the refugee centre also offers legal aid, especially concerning employment and business establishment issues. The centre has two lawyers, one of whom is Turkish of Iraqi origin and the other is Syrian. The Syrian lawyer was formally employed as a secretary as he is not authorised to practice his job in Turkey. Legal advice is also given by the Sisli Refugee Centre and by the volunteers of TOHAV (*Toplum ve Hukuk Arastirmalari Vakfi*, Foundation for Social and Juristical Research).

3.3.3. *Health Services*

While municipalities direct refugees to the appropriate health centres and hospitals, some offer more advanced facilities. In Sultanbeyli 15 Syrian doctors work at a polyclinic and a laboratory incorporated into the refugee centre. The polyclinic also includes psychosocial services among its 11 clinics.⁹ There is also a pharmaceutical store, as the medications prescribed by these doctors are not covered by the Turkish health system. At the Sisli Refugee Centre, the physician only directs the refugees to the appropriate health institutions but does not practice medicine. Somewhat unusually, the centre also assists unregistered refugees. People who are not accepted by public hospitals are directed to a contracted private hospital and pharmacy, where they are given proper healthcare.

Although the Zeytinburnu municipality has not established an independent refugee centre, refugees have been accepted in AKDEM, and provided with comprehensive health services including hydrotherapy, phys-

⁹ See <http://multeciler.org.tr/multeciler-dernegi-hizmet-rehberi/>

iotherapy, and special education for disabled persons. Home care and psychosocial therapy have also been provided, especially for traumatised children.

Concerning health services, the biggest challenge is not access, because it is part of central government policy to have public hospitals accept and treat refugees. However, language may present a barrier between Syrians and health professionals (Woods & Kayali, 2017, p. 15) and thus refugee centres that employ Arabic-speaking personnel meet a crucial need.

3.3.4. *Education Services*

Education of refugee children poses one of the biggest challenges for local administrations (Woods & Kayali 2017, p. 15). Firstly, the language barrier has been most severely felt in education. The Bağcılar, Esenyurt, Zeytinburnu, Sultanbeyli, and Sisli municipalities offer Turkish language classes to children and adults. Secondly, Syrian children who lack the requisite official documents, such as passports and their old school records, are not accepted into Turkish public schools. Nearly 400,000 or 500,000 children, according to Human Rights Watch (2016, p. 583) and Kayali & Asquith (2016) respectively, remain outside the education system entirely and many of them are left with no choice but early marriage or work. Indeed, Sisli officials have stated that some Syrian school-age children who have been there for five years have not received any formal education. Therefore, they are concerned that a lost generation is forming, which could lead to social problems in the near future. Thirdly, the most deprived families are obliged to send their children to work. Some municipalities have programmes to get these Syrian children into schools. In Sultanbeyli, the Social Assistance Department and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies cooperate to offer financial support to families on condition that they send their children to school. Financial support for two children is almost equal to the minimum wage. In Sisli, the All Children Are Ours Association has assured the same kind of funding for six families chosen by the municipality.

Three options seemed to exist until recently for the schooling of refugee children: Syrian schools, Turkish public/private schools, and temporary education centres. Some Syrian families who could afford school fees have preferred to send their children to Syrian private schools, where administration and instruction are conducted in Arabic with a modified Syrian curriculum (Kayali & Asquith, 2016). However, the government has closed down Syrian schools and plans to gradually abolish temporary education

centres¹⁰ (*gecici egitim kurumlari*) in order to integrate Syrian children into the Turkish education system. Yet Syrian families sometimes choose not to send their children to local Turkish public schools due to bullying, a lack of available space, or the expectation that they will return home in the future. For Syrian children attending Turkish schools, another problem is the fact that teachers have not been trained to teach Turkish as a foreign language nor how to deal with children suffering from the trauma of war and upheaval. Indeed, among some 330,000 Syrian children who are enrolled in Turkish schools, according to the Ministry of Education, many are struggling. Some children face bullying or social exclusion. The Zeytinburnu and Sultanbeyli municipalities have programmes to support these children and their families.

In Zeytinburnu, the municipality has solicited the collaboration of Yildiz Technical University to develop an appropriate method and content for teaching Turkish. It has also conducted a programme designed to train primary school teachers working in public schools on how to interact with Syrian children who suffer from learning disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, which may lead to failure at school.¹¹ Similarly, the municipality has reactivated a former programme run with Cerrahpasa and Macedonian Universities for Turkish children, to sensitise refugee children and their families to child abuse. However, these programmes need to be sustained and systematised. The Sultanbeyli municipality also has a mentor support programme for primary school students. In the municipality, there are 1,200 students in temporary education and 1,280 in Turkish public schools. For the time being the programme has only been put into practice at one school. The municipality also has a kindergarten for Syrian children near the refugee centre.

3.4. Integration-Oriented Long-Term Programmes

Various studies (Woods & Kayali, 2017; Erdogan, 2017) evaluating municipal actions towards Syrian refugees in Istanbul, as well as interviews we have conducted with the representatives of the three municipalities, con-

¹⁰ According to the Ministry of Education, there are 67 temporary education centres in Istanbul.

¹¹ The coordinator of AKDEM, a clinical psychologist who supervised the programme, described the reaction of schoolteachers who do not want Syrian children in their classes because of behavioural disorders and low success rates.

firm that the mayor's attitude and political will are decisive for the scope and quality of the services delivered. The municipalities, which maintain a positive stance towards the refugee population and face a steadily increasing demand for services and assistance, have had to develop ad hoc and sometimes innovative solutions. However, the challenges faced and solutions developed vary from one municipality to another, depending on their financial and human resources, as well as institutional capacities. Indeed, the education and professional background of the local officials who direct the municipality's activities seem to be equally important in local policy formation. The coordinator of AKDEM in Zeytinburnu is a clinical psychologist and the two employees of the Migration Unit of Sisli are sociologists. The representative of the Sultanbeyli municipality has a degree in political science and public administration. These factors have had a considerable impact on the perspectives from which they evaluate the issue and the features of migration they have emphasized.

Consequently, some municipalities deal not only with satisfying the daily needs of refugee populations but also their integration into Turkish society and urban life, as in the case of the Zeytinburnu and Sultanbeyli municipalities. These also appear to have a leading role concerning the support, services, and diversified solutions delivered to Syrian refugees. Indeed, Zeytinburnu has historically been a destination for internal immigration. Currently, the positive and embracing attitude towards refugee populations is attracting not only Syrians but also Afghans, Uzbeks, and Uyghurs. The coordinator of AKDEM affirms that the mayor is genuinely sensitive to the difficulties of the refugees and acknowledges that a substantial part of the refugee population will not leave and are potentially permanent residents of the district. Therefore, the municipality is trying to elaborate more diversified and advanced integration policies based on teaching the Turkish language, culture, and values. The Zeytinburnu municipality is also taking part in the "Learning of Local Bodies to Integrate Immigrants" project, aimed at better integration of immigrants and funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.¹² Activities like archery courses have been organised to bring together Turkish and refugee children, and facilitate better inclusion of refugee children.

The municipality also works with universities on diverse issues concerning immigration and refugees. For instance, the municipality collaborates with Bezmi Alem University on a social solidarity project, which aims to

¹² See www.ll2ii.eu

connect families in need with people who wish to help the refugee population and are looking for a reliable facilitator to achieve this. Another purpose of the project is to guide refugee families in their search for employment. The Zeytinburnu municipality has also organised two international symposia on immigration.

The Sultanbeyli municipality has a singular point of view concerning the future of the refugees within their territory and questions the prevailing (and dominantly western) concepts of integration, which see integration as a process whereby immigrants become accepted in society. Moving on from the idea that there are two parties engaged in integration processes (the immigrants, with their qualities, energies, and adaptation, and the receiving community), they consider the process to be an interaction between two sides. The receiving society should also evolve to understand and accept the other, which is why they prefer to call the process “harmonisation” rather than “integration”. The Sultanbeyli municipality is currently conducting research in collaboration with Hacettepe University on the perceptions Syrian and Turkish residents have of each other, hoping that the findings will guide them to build proper policies and develop a genuine model of harmonisation.

The Sisli municipality has the second largest refugee population among social democratic (opposition) party affiliated municipalities. Its numerous progressive ideas, such as organising a series of workshops to gather and preserve oral history or creating a neighbourhood council which also embraces refugees, outnumber those of other municipalities, but its achievements remain modest. So far, a series of seminars on women’s health have been organised in collaboration with the History Foundation, which many Syrian women have attended. The municipality wants to conduct a field study in collaboration with a university in order to have better understanding of their area. As a municipality that has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, they are also planning to conduct studies involving Syrian children.

3.5. Services that Could Not Satisfactorily be Delivered by Municipalities: Housing and Employment

Naturally, the most urgent need for Syrian refugees is housing. However, the competencies of Turkish local administrations concerning social housing are not very clear. Indeed, municipal law (binding ordinary municipalities and the lower tier of metropolitan municipalities) enumerates

housing among their general duties. Nevertheless, no mention is made of social housing or accommodation for disadvantaged or low-income groups; hence social housing is not a domain in which Turkish municipalities have been actively involved. However, some lower tier municipalities (Uskudar, Sultanbeyli, Bagcilar, Basaksehir, and Pendik) consider access to housing to be a primary concern for refugees and help them to find proper housing (Woods & Kayali, 2017, pp. 14–15). Some municipalities (Sultanbeyli, Zeytinburnu) offer accommodation facilities for short periods until the persons in need find permanent accommodation. In Sultanbeyli, the municipality has eight apartments reserved for women victims of violence or those without a family. In April of 2017, 15 women and 23 children were being sheltered in these apartments. Similarly, the Sisli municipality has signed a protocol with Mor Cati Women's Shelter Foundation in order to provide accommodation to women who need protection or are in danger. Although municipalities generally avoid cash assistance, Zeytinburnu and Sisli municipal officials affirmed having supplied one-time financial aid for accommodation purposes in some exceptional cases.

As far as employment is concerned, although local officials are aware of the fact that it is crucial for refugee families to gain financial independence and become integrated into the host society, employment is not within the purview of the municipalities either. However, in Sultanbeyli the refugee centre collaborates with IMPR Humanitarian to help Syrian entrepreneurs to get a work permit and set up a business. The centre also operates like an employment agency, making a record of job-seekers' requirements on the one hand and of Turkish firms needing employees on the other. So far, more than 1,000 jobs have been secured. The Sancaktepe municipality receives refugee job applications alongside those of Turkish citizens in its career centre and guides them in finding work in collaboration with ISKUR (the State Employment Agency). Similarly, the officials of Sisli municipality are seeking opportunities to support small entrepreneurs from Syria via ISKUR.

Furthermore, workshops for education and training in crafts may prepare refugees with craft skills for the wider creative economy. Sultanbeyli and Zeytinburnu offer diverse workshops including crafts, music, tailoring, and hairdressing. Indeed, in Zeytinburnu, a trademark (*kar sercesi*) has been spontaneously created at a women's workshop, and the municipality plans to organise the sale of the workshop's products to gain financial support for women.

The assessment of local capacities to deal with refugee populations reveals that Sultanbeyli is the most ingenious and proactive lower tier municipi-

pality in Istanbul. Nevertheless, the municipality seems to attribute its effectiveness to a practical approach to identifying potential interventions.¹³ Evidently, as an AKP-affiliated municipal administration, it originates from the same political and ideological source as the central government, which allows it greater freedom of action. The same juxtaposition may be observed between the refugee population and Sultanbeyli's social fabric. In Zeytinburnu, while a welcoming atmosphere has been assured for refugees, the administration opts to seek appropriate solutions within the given institutional framework. As an opposition party municipality, Sisli seems to be trapped between the responsibilities dictated by the democratic and humanitarian values it defends and the legal and administrative restrictions clearly more binding for opposition municipalities. The local officials of the Migration Unit as well as the refugee centre social worker in Sisli emphasize that they also resort to the personal and institutional network they have in order to produce rapid and effective solutions to the refugees' problems. Similarly, sometimes they have to exploit the weak points in the system to help refugees in need, which makes them feel like activists. In contrast, the Sultanbeyli municipality takes advantage of having access to a more effective and powerful network, including the private sector as well.

4. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The lack of legal clarity regarding local administrations' responsibilities concerning refugees constitutes a major obstacle to the enhancement of local action. These administrations have had to accept large refugee communities and attempt to meet their needs without a well-defined legal framework concerning the assistance and services they should deliver to refugees, and lacking clear provisions. Under these circumstances, the local programmes implemented in a particular locality depend largely on the mayor's stance on the issue and willingness to take action. The solutions which the mayors find are also proportional to their creativity, financial resources they can deploy, and their building capacity. Some have tried to further develop comprehensive schemes of support and longer-term inte-

¹³ It is interesting to note that the large settlement at Sultanbeyli, which is located roughly 35 km from the city centre, was informally built. The development of Sultanbeyli largely took place during the 1980s, and its pioneers were promoting the idea of a neighbourhood with an Islamic way of life. Sultanbeyli had thus been transformed from a tiny village to an influential lower tier municipality by 1987 (Pinarcioglu & Isik, 2008, p. 1360).

gration programmes for Syrian refugees, even if their policy-making is ad hoc and non-systematic, and the policies developed are sometimes insufficient or unsustainable. Even the most proactive ones have difficulties developing better policy actions and adapting their social cohesion policies to the migration context of their territory. It would not be wrong to claim that muddling through determines local action, which has been built gradually.

The lack of competence may be explained by a low level of decentralisation, as well as by the fact that external immigration and the unprecedented refugee influx have constituted new experiences for Turkish public authorities. However, the inaction of the government since then may also be considered a political choice. As long as the refugees constitute a possible deal between the EU and the Turkish government, it would not be realistic to expect the Turkish government to take binding legal measures and to determine medium- and long-term policies. This considerably limits the capacity of municipalities to carry out social inclusion policies for refugees and create solutions for the issues of exclusion, local conflicts in the informal economy, delinquency, and the like. As emphasized by the interviewed Sultanbeyli official, having no reliable perspective for the future (like eventual naturalisation) means refugees drift into despair and anxiety, which in turn jeopardises every effort towards their integration into the host society. There is a crucial need for interinstitutional coordination between the state and the municipalities, in particular on issues related to employment, housing, education, and health. However, the government has so far emphasized the security and social assistance dimensions.

Refugee populations have created a strain on the physical and social infrastructure of municipalities. Furthermore, services designed for refugees would have created a considerable burden on municipality budgets if municipalities had actually provided them. Indeed, the most important share of municipal revenues comes from central government transfers, which are calculated based on the population. Obviously, the population refers to Turkish citizens and the refugee population, which is up to 10% within the boundaries of some municipalities, is not taken into consideration. However, it is not possible to obtain any valid data on municipal spending concerning refugees (Erdogan, 2017, p. 99). The most important reason for this is the hesitation of municipalities regarding the legal basis of their activities concerning non-citizens. The money spent on refugees comes from the social assistance budget, but it is impossible to know the exact amount, as services allocated to refugees could not be explicitly included among the budget items. Donations are the second largest spending item of the municipalities, but most municipalities do not keep meticulous records of donations either,

except for Sultanbeyli, which has received substantial financial aid from international organisations. Although it is not possible to accurately determine the exact financial burden refugees pose for municipalities, it is clear that they require financial support from the central budget in order to be able to plan and carry out necessary policy actions to deal with refugee issues.

The increasing rate of Syrian refugees effectively puts extra pressure on the service delivery capacity of local administrations in fields such as health centres and schools. Social tensions have been observed in some localities between refugees and local residents. The idea that resources have been unfairly used for Syrian refugees and competition on the labour market has triggered the frustration of local residents and made refugees targets of discrimination, harassment, and xenophobic attacks¹⁴ (Erdogan, 2017; Woods & Kayali, 2017). “One possible long-term consequence of such migration is the ghettoization of refugee and Syrian populations as they coalesce around localized urban enclaves where their immediate needs are more readily met” (Woods & Kayali, 2017, p. 14).

A lack of coordination has also been observed between district municipalities, the metropolitan municipality, and other local public institutions, especially the Governorship, the District Governorship, the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management, the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation, the Ministry of National Education, and the Ministry of Health (Erdogan, 2017, p. 120). It would be a good idea if the metropolitan municipality were to manage a common database, coordinate the services assured by district municipalities, and ensure relations with central government and other state institutions.

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¹⁴ Interviews with local officials confirm this fact.

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REFUGEE CRISIS AND LOCAL RESPONSES: AN ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL CAPACITIES TO DEAL WITH MIGRATION INFLUXES IN ISTANBUL

Summary

Although Turkey has been gradually transforming into a country of asylum, its legislation concerning refugees remains inadequate to guarantee the fundamental rights and basic needs of this population, such as accommodation, healthcare, and employment. However, following legal modifications in 1994 and 2013, persons from non-European countries have been allowed to apply for “temporary asylum” in Turkey. Currently, almost 90% of Syrian refugees in Turkey live in different Turkish cities, and Istanbul is hosting the highest number of out-of-camp Syrians. Temporary asylum status provides these refugees with some basic needs. Refugees living in camps have access to education, water, food, shelter, and health services, while others may benefit only from the right to free healthcare and medication if they are registered. Consequently, the non-camp populations living in different cities have exerted considerable pressure on municipalities.

The present study tries to analyse the legal and administrative framework in Turkey which provides assistance to refugees at the local level. For this purpose, the experiences of lower tier municipalities in Istanbul have been described, and their capacities as well as difficulties in dealing with the crisis have been assessed. The study focuses on three municipalities: Zeytinburnu, Sultanbeyli, and Sisli. In Istanbul, services delivered to Syrian refugees vary noticeably from one municipality to another. The lower tier municipalities generally incorporate the services they offer to refugees within the framework of emergency management, and more specifically, assistance to the poor and needy. However, a few municipalities do carry out well-developed, integration-oriented, and longer-term programmes. It would not be wrong to claim that muddling through determines local action, which has been built gradually. The lack of legal clarity surrounding local administrations’ responsibilities towards refugees and the lack of long-term governmental policies constitute major obstacles to the enhancement of local action.

Keywords: Syrian refugees, Istanbul municipalities, local capacity

IZBJEGLIČKA KRIZA I LOKALNI ODAZIV: KAKO SE LOKALNI KAPACITETI NOSE S PRILJEVOM MIGRANATA U ISTANBUL

Sažetak

Iako Turska postupno postaje zemlja azila, zakonodavstvo koje se bavi izbjeglicama i dalje je nedostavno da bi se izbjegličkoj populaciji zajamčila osnovna prava i osigurala osnovne potrebe, primjerice smještaj, zdravstvena zaštita i zaposlenje. Izmjenama zakona uvedenih 1994. i 2013. godine državljani izvan-europskih država stekli su mogućnost dobivanja "privremenog azila" u Turskoj. Trenutno gotovo 90% sirijskih izbjeglica u Turskoj živi u gradovima, a najveći broj izbjeglica smještenih izvan kampova živi u Istanbulu. Status privremenog azila osigurava im osnovne potrebe. Izbjeglicama smještenima u kampovima osigurano je sklonište, hrana, voda, zdravstvena skrb i mogućnost školovanja, no ostali mogu iskoristiti pravo na besplatnu zdravstvenu skrb i lijekove jedino ako su registrirani. Stoga izbjeglice izvan kampova stvaraju velik pritisak na općine u gradovima u kojima žive.

U radu se analizira turski zakonski i administrativni okvir unutar kojega se na lokalnoj razini pruža pomoć izbjeglicama. Razmatraju se iskustva istanbulske općine niže razine te se ocjenjuju njihovi kapaciteti i načini na koji su se nosili s poteškoćama u kriznom razdoblju. U radu se u tom smislu detaljnije opisuju tri općine: Zeytinburnu, Sultanbeyli i Sisli. Usluge namijenjene sirijskim izbjeglicama u Istanbulu znatno se razlikuju u svakoj općini. Općine niže razine obično smještaju takve usluge u područje upravljanja kriznim situacijama, posebice u područje pomoći siromašnim i potrebitim osobama. Samo mali broj općina provodi dobro osmišljene i dugoročnije programe usmjerene integraciji. Ne bi bilo netočno tvrditi da se lokalni potezi temelje na snalaženju. Glavnu prepreku unaprijeđenju lokalnih poteza čini nedovoljno jasna pravna situacija što se tiče odgovornosti lokalne administracije prema izbjeglicama kao i nedostatak dugoročne državne politike.

Ključne riječi: sirijske izbjeglice, istanbulske općine, lokalni kapaciteti