

# **Forced Migrants in a Satellite City of Turkey, Eskisehir**

**(Draft Report)**

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## **Introduction**

This report entails an overview of the location of forced migrant labor in the specific case of satellite city, Eskisehir –a deindustrialized city trying to position itself with cultural and education industries.

The satellite city system was designed to provide temporal residence for refugees who live in a liminal state before their eventual resettlement to a third country. With the extension of the resettlement process, the regulations on free movement had boundary making implications on movement, integration and inclusion into the Turkish society. The nature of Eskisehir as a satellite city and the way particular legacies are acted out in this city (e.g. being open-minded and liberal) determines the peculiarities of Eskişehir as a city with very different economy, class structure, and, consequently, opportunity structures (work and business) and resources (including the institutional resources) for refugees and forced migrants from various country of origins.

This necessitates a scrutinization of this location in interaction of the various refugee groups with variegated legal positions interaction with class, race/ethnicity, and gender dynamics in the city. In this regard, refugees' inclusion in the labor market traditionally segmented by class, race and gender through their legal exclusion, illegality, is not a simple articulation, but it rather refines labor relations in a sphere outside of the law. Gender and racial discrimination, translating into body politics, sharpens these relations. In this sense, the interaction of the legal/labor regime with race and gender in Eskisehir will be situated within a broader view of migration/refugee governance policies and a plethora of legal categories which produce legal dispossession and illegality in Turkey.

In this context, the politics of care plays a role to “take care” of those who cannot “take care” of themselves. The policies and interventions of local and international institutional actors, such as local administrations and refugee aid NGO's financed and supported by the UNHCR and the European Union, play a crucial role in terms of providing institutional resources to the livelihood possibilities of different forced migrant groups in the city. Protection and aid structures also contribute to maintaining surveillance and control over the refugee community who live in a ‘modern-day open-air prison’, as the refugee and forced migrant community refer to it.

### **a) Eskişehir as a Changing and Welcoming City**

With a population of 870.000, Eskişehir is a midsize Northwestern Anatolian city situated between İstanbul and Ankara. Connected to the two biggest major cities of the country by a fast train, Eskişehir is 2,5 hours away from Istanbul and 1,5 hours from Ankara. The cities'

proximity and accessibility to socio-economic hubs of the country facilitates and promotes internal tourism as well as inter-city socio-economic relations.

Eskişehir also holds a very politically significant place, being the only Anatolian city not ruled by the governing party, Justice and Development Party (AKP). Called the ‘Castle of Republicanism’ in Anatolia, the metropolitan municipality of the city is ruled by the main opposition party, Republican People’s Party (CHP) since 1999 under the mayorship of the former president of the Anatolian University, Yılmaz Büyükerşen. Under Büyükerşen’s mayorship, Eskişehir went through an urban restructuring as a result of capital restructuring and reallocation of city resources despite being strongly underfunded by the State because of its oppositional politics. The political conflict between the metropolitan municipality and the ruling AKP reached its peak with the planned construction of a thermic plant near Eskişehir in the Alpu Plain, against which the municipality openly campaigned due to the potential contamination of the farming land and water resources of the city<sup>1</sup>.

### I. Urban Restructuring and Renewal

During Büyükerşen’s mayorship, the city has also gone through a rebranding as a modern, European city, and has therefore undergone a profound urban restructuring process. While urban renewal generally signifies all kinds of dispossessions, tensions, conflicts and interests, the urban renewal project in Eskişehir was celebrated in a festive way by the municipality as well as the cities habitants as a sign of modernization of the city (Civelek, 2019). Despite its limited economic growth, Eskişehir became an exceptional city due to its progressive local administration invested in turning the city into a cultural hub. These efforts resulted in transformation of urban spaces in Eskişehir. In regard to Harvey’s (2001) ‘urban entrepreneurialism’, strategy by the metropolitan municipality, commodification of the city center took place through erosion of the urban public places and spaces of production, creation of consumption spaces and entertainment centers for the middle class. In the last decade, due to development and restructuring plans of the local administration, the former industrial zone was transformed into spaces of residence and consumption for the new middle and upper middle classes. In this sense, deindustrialization due to gentrification is visible in the city as former production spaces turned into residences, shopping malls, cafés, and restaurants (Akarçay and Suğur, 2016). Parallely, the rebranding of the city as a modern European city took place. The historical fabric of the city has been promoted through restoration in the historic downtown, Odunpazarı, while on the other hand, a postmodernist ‘artificial’ city ecstastic has been aimed through gentrification and the expansion of spaces of consumption in the Tepebaşı neighborhood. In this sense, the city has been branded as a place where tradition meets modernity and promoted as a destination for domestic tourism.

### II) Eskişehir as a Migrant Welcoming City

Historically, Eskişehir has been known a migrant welcoming city since the late Ottoman period. In mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Turkic Crimean Tatars, who migrated to Anatolia due to the Crimean war, settled in Eskişehir (Jankowski, 2000). Thus, the Crimean dish *çi börek* (beautiful börek) is still one of the cultural symbols of the city today. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, ethnic Turks from the Balkans settled in Eskişehir as well. Today, the liberal

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<sup>1</sup> Büyükerşen: Termic Plant Means Murder of Eskişehir. 01 December 2017, <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/339453/buyukersen-termik-santral-eskisehir-icin-bir-cinayettir>, consulted on 18 June 2020.

and modern social fabric of the city, progressive local administration, and heterogeneous cultural structure all combined might be expected to present a welcoming city for the newcomer forced migrants. In fact, the statements of forced migrants living in Eskişehir support this claim, when compared with neighboring Anatolian cities. Although the anti-refugee sentiments (Göktuna Yaylacı, 2017) and contestations between the refugee and local community are on the rise, Eskişehir still presents a relatively better alternative in terms of refugees' emplacement<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, when the resettlement and opportunity structures for refugees are examined, it is possible to observe the impact of the local administration on refugee settlement patterns. Refugee settlement within the progressive Tepebaşı municipality, as opposed to the more conservative Odunpazarı municipality under AKP rule, gives us clues concerning the impact of the social fabric, the urban structuring and renewal, as well as local administrative politics. Unlike Odunpazarı, Tepebaşı municipality supports refugees with material aid as well as cultural and educational activities such as hosting the African dance group Old City Fire, the Iranian music band Over the Rainbow and university exam preparation classes for foreigners.

## **b) Turkish Asylum and Satellite City Regime**

### **I) A Unique Emplacement Regime: Satellite Cities in Turkey**

While Turkey has arrived at a crossroads in terms of its migration policies with the arrival of 3,5 million Syrian refugees, becoming the most refugee hosting country in the world, the most important obstacle standing in the way of legal protection and integration of migrants and refugees is the geographic limitation Turkey has been implementing on the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Turkey signed the 1951 Geneva Convention with a geographic limitation clause (Kirişçi, 1991). According to the limitation, Turkey grants full refugee status only to those escaping persecution in Europe, meanwhile asylum seekers from other parts of the world can only obtain temporary international protection until their resettlement to a third country. The new Law on Foreigners and International Protection, which came to force in April 2014, created two categories of conditional refugees: temporary protection for Syrian forced migrants who arrived Turkey due to mass migration, and international protection for those from other non-EU countries such as Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, and African countries. Refugees under international protection, conditional refugees in the Turkish legal system, are assigned to reside in a city called a *satellite city* until their eventual resettlement to a third country (Sarı and Dinçer, 2017). However, due to the prolongation of the resettlement procedure, refugees are expected to reside in these cities for up to 10 years, depending on their refugee claims and country of origin. The number of refugees under international protection in Turkey is estimated to be around 365.000 and 70% of refugees are women and children<sup>3</sup>.

The satellite city regime came into place in 1950 with the Law on Residence and Travel of Foreigners (No:5683) stating that asylum seekers can only reside in cities appointed by the Ministry of Interior and the restriction has been repeated in the following legal documents regarding asylum. There are currently 62 satellite cities in Turkey, tripled since 2000 (Biner,

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<sup>2</sup> Observations and interview quotations in the text originate from the ethnographic research conducted by the author during 2017-2018 as a part of her doctoral studies.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR Fact Sheet 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCRTurkeyFactSheet-October2017.pdf>, consulted on 18 June 2020.

2016; Kahya Nizam and Sallan Gül, 2017). Refugees are expected to reside in these cities and their travel within the country, with the exception of short-term visits, is prohibited. The reasoning behind the settlement restriction is explained as avoiding the concentration of the asylum seeker population in the Eastern border cities of the country. While there are no public guidelines for the settlement patterns, it is understood that refugees are assigned to their satellite cities by their entry point to Turkey, gender, age, sexual orientation, relatives in Turkey, and concentration of the refugee communities in the cities (Biner, 2016). Unlike other refugee settlements, such as refugee camps, the satellite city regime foresees temporariness and self-sustainability on the parts of the forced migrants. Refugees are expected to meet their own needs without regulated structures of financial, social, and legal aid. The legal restrictions on settlement and travel, and the lack of infrastructure in order to support emplacement of the refugees, create a surveillance regime and disciplining structure that creates a different experience than a normal urban refugee settlement. (idib)

The satellite city regime presents a unique case in terms of refugees' emplacement compared to other countries where forced migrants are either settled in closed spaces such as detention centers or camps, or the countries where the settlement or travel is not restricted at all. According to Sert and Yıldız (2011), while satellite city is not a camp, it resembles a camp-like situation because of the restrictions and regulations on the principle of free movement as well as the opportunity structures. The limited research on satellite cities underlines the disciplining mentality behind the satellite city regime, representing refugees as potential security threats that need to be controlled and surveilled by being assigned to conservative small to mid-size cities. The emphasis on public order and security found in the legal papers support these claims. The sui generis characteristics of the satellite city regime that assigned forced migrants to urban spaces that are actually formed as semi-camp spaces creates a state of permanent temporariness. In fact, the precarity of the legal status of conventional refugee, in addition to the prolongment of the resettlement period, which may take up to 10 years or more depending on the refugee claims, force refugees to live in a permanent state of temporariness, neither able to stay nor leave.

As bigger cities of Turkey who present job opportunities for refugees are not listed as satellite cities, refugees are expected to reside in smaller cities of Anatolia, with very limited opportunities in the job market (e.i construction, housework and some restaurant jobs), which make it almost impossible for forced migrants to work. Refugees residing in satellite cities are also not able to find opportunities elsewhere. They are expected to reside in their satellite city permanently until their resettlement to a third country and are not allowed to travel to other cities without a travel permit. The travel permits provided by the local Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) offices allow refugee to travel for up to 15 days for a specific reason, such as medical necessity or family visitation. In this sense, the satellite city regime with travel restrictions, called an open-air prison by refugees themselves, strongly shapes the opportunity structures available to refugees, as well as their socio-economic inclusion.

In some satellite cities, refugees are expected to visit their local DGMM office weekly. The weekly signature duty is the most important obstacle regarding forced migrants' freedom of movement, especially for those assigned to live in satellite cities close to bigger non-satellite cities, choose to reside in these bigger cities and commute to their satellite city only for signature. These cities are mostly Istanbul and Ankara, which provide forced migrants job opportunities in their tremendous informal labor market, more access to civil society organizations, solidarity organization and networks, communication opportunities due to translation services, and religious, cultural, and entertainment activities (idib). On the other

hand, not residing in one's assigned satellite city has legal and social consequences. Those who leave their satellite city without the necessary travel permit face suspension of their legal refugee status and falling into temporal illegality, and thus cannot benefit from social rights and access to services such as health and education.

## II) Eskişehir as a Satellite City

While the disciplining and surveillance, as well as lack of opportunity structures are the common threads of all satellite cities, the uniqueness of Eskişehir lies in its liberal local administration and the relative open-mindedness of the local community. The limited research on satellite cities such as Isparta, Kütahya and Yalova stress the impact of conservatism shaping the relationship between the refugee and local community, whereas in Eskişehir, while the opportunity structures due to deindustrialization of the city show a similar pattern, the experiences of exclusion and discrimination for being a foreigner are expected to be relatively less. This does not mean that intersectional axes of discrimination, gender, sexual orientation, and race play an important role in terms of shaping forced migrants' daily interactions as well as opportunity structures in the labor market.

Known as the one of the oldest and biggest satellite cities in Turkey, Eskişehir currently hosts 25.000 refugees under international protection from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia and other African countries. When the settlement strategy and individual claims made by those residing in Eskişehir is examined, it is possible to trace numerous reasons and refugee claim patterns. Although the numbers and reasons for settlement by UNHCR is not publicly available, as mentioned above, it is known that refugee communities from similar countries and refugee claims are settled in the same satellite city. In Eskişehir, two patterns emerge: escaping from war and violence, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In the case of refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan, the ongoing war and violence is the main reason of seeking refuge, whereas for those from Iran (mostly LGBTI+ refugees), Somalia, and other African countries, such as DRC and Ivory Coast, the refugee claims concentrate on SGBV. The reason why Eskişehir has been chosen for sexual minorities and women with SGBV experience is believed to be its progressive politics and open-mindedness where the experiences of phobia and (sexual) harassment are expected to be less. While refugees living in Eskişehir state that there is some merit to this assumption, and the experiences of discrimination and violence are relatively less in comparison to other more conservative satellite cities, it is important to note that they still exist.

When urban settlement patterns of refugees in Eskişehir is concerned, it is possible to observe that refugees mostly reside in relatively low-income neighborhoods in the outskirts of the city, not yet influenced by the growing and urban gentrification of the city, where the university campus of Osmangazi and Anadolu Universities are located. The only exception is some of the Iraqi community living in the very center of the city. The concentration of Iraqi refugees in the old part of the town in Odunpazarı neighborhood, which is mostly inhabited by an older migrant community from Crimea, create contestations and experiences of discrimination. For example, the increasing number of Iraqi children in the classes of Şeyit Piyade Üsteğmen Gökhan Yavuz Elementary School, results in discontent of Turkish parents who chose to send their children to school in other neighborhoods where there are less refugee students.

Unlike refugees under international protection who are appointed to satellite cities by UNHCR, Syrian refugees under temporary protection have the opportunity to choose their city of settlement. In Eskişehir, unlike refugees under international protection who reside in the

urban areas, there are around 4,500 Syrian refugees living in the rural areas and working in agriculture. However, because of their settlement pattern, they are quite invisible in the society.

### **c) Forced Migrants Participation to Labor**

The legal restrictions regarding work permits for refugees, the structure of the labor market in Eskisehir effected by deindustrialization and urban renewal, as well as the segmented labor market by gender and race/ethnicity shape the opportunity structures for forced migrants in the particular locality of Eskişehir.

#### **I) Lack of Work Permit**

While forced migrants in Turkey are entitled to apply for and receive work permits, the *de facto* impossibility of obtaining a work permit has two major effects on refugees' involvement in the labor market in satellite cities of Turkey. The first and more predominant outcome of legal dispossession is unemployment. Due to the legal procedure of obtaining a work permit for foreigners in Turkey, the employers who are willing to employ foreigners are expected to go through an expensive and difficult online application procedure with the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Work. The employers also have to respect the 1/5 rule, which signifies that for each foreign employee, they have to employ at least 5 Turkish employees, and in most circumstances the employer should be paying their foreign employees an amount determined by the law, which is more than their Turkish counterparts. As a result, employees prefer not to employ foreigners unless it is highly necessary or employ them without a work permit, illegally, in order to reduce their production costs. The reason why employment without a work permit is categorized as illegal in this report is that employing a foreigner without the necessary work permit and social security is punishable by law, for both employees and employers. In addition, the impact of employment without the necessary documents in terms of labor relations and subject creation is very similar to illegality.

Even though forced migrants under international protection have legal means to reside in the country, the legal framework of labor, intentionally excluding forced migrant from the labor market, or including them through their legal exclusion, can be considered as an intentional way of creating precarious labor relations and subjectivities by legal production of illegality (De Genova, 2002). Refugees' inclusion in the labor market traditionally segmented by class, race, and gender through their legal exclusion, illegality, is not a simple articulation, but it rather refines labor relations in a sphere outside of the law. The legal production of illegality in the labor market also exceeds precarious employment norms, creating precarious subjectivities, dispossessed, invisible in society through their legal, physical, spatial, and cultural exclusion, all of which determine the refugee community's relation among themselves as well as with the State and the host community.

The impact of illegality is firstly visible in the labor relations. Employees who are illegality employed are generally forced to work longer hours under more precarious labor conditions, thus exposed to more labor related incidents, significantly underpaid relative to their Turkish counterparts, and doing mostly heavy manual labor less preferred by the locals. In addition, because of their lack of legal labor protection, in the cases of incidents or wrongful dismissal, forced migrants, who face legal penalties and the risk of deportation in the case of illegal employment, are unable to approach the police and file an official complaint. The impunity created by illegality contributes to further labor exploitation and precarity. In this sense, illegality becomes a disciplining power which dispossess employees from their access to rights.

During my interviews with the social workers in the field of refugee protection, I was informed that numerous refugees approach NGO's concerning wrongful dismissal but none of them were willing to approach the authorities to file an official complaint as they were afraid of facing severe consequences. Moreover, due to the competition between refugees in the very limited job market, it is not uncommon for a refugee to inform the authorities against others working illegally.

## II) Intersectional Segmentation in Labor Participation

The lack of legal protection shapes the labor relations and opportunity structures in the labor market, already segmented by gender and race. Due to urban renewal and deindustrialization of Eskişehir, refugee men are commonly employed in construction, relatively less in heavy industry, and raw material production such as sugar. Because of their undocumented labor status, they are forced to work under precarious conditions, mostly doing dangerous manual work not preferred by the locals and are underpaid, if paid at all. Employers are systematically failing to pay a fair amount to their refugee employees, benefiting from their undocumented position, which makes it impossible for them to file an official complaint with the police. On the other hand, refugee women remain unemployed, trying to survive on the financial aid they are receiving from the State or other institutions. As it will be explained further in the section on financial aid schemes, refugee men are generally not entitled to benefit from financial assistance as they are expected fulfill their tradition gender roles by working and providing for themselves and their families.

Economic and forced migrant women's arrival to Turkey increased drastically in the 1990's due to the economic and political instabilities and transformations in the neighboring regions. During this period, the feminization of migration to Turkey took place, especially with the migration of women from former-Soviet counties followed by the Middle East and African countries in the 2000's. Similar to the general trend, feminization of migration to Turkey was marked by the employment of women in 'feminized domains' such as care/domestic work, sex work, entertainment (see Gülçür& İlkaracan, 2002; Akalın, 2007; Eder,2015; Ünlütürk& Kalfa, 2009; Toksöz& Ulutaş, 2012). Toksöz and Ulutaş (2012) show that Turkey's flexible visa regimes towards former Eastern Bloc countries such as Moldova, Romania, Georgia, and Turkmenistan, and the growing need for flexible and cheap labor for care and domestic work as a result of increasing participation of middle class women in wage labor, provided a favorable context for women's migration and employment in these sectors in Turkey. However, the domestic/care labor market is not only segmented by gender but also by race and ethnicity. While migrant women from Former-Soviet countries are exclusively preferred because of their 'European' and 'more civilized' characteristics, women from Turkic republics are preferred for their assumed cultural similarities and submissive nature (ibid). While ethnicity and ethnic niches might provide migrants employment opportunities, ethnic and racial discrimination also plays an important role in terms of determining these employment patterns. In the case of Sub-Saharan migrant women, color racism is very crucial, as it is very unlikely for Black women to be employed in these feminized domains of labor, with the exception of sex work.

In the case of Eskişehir, migrant women's labor participation is highly limited, with some exceptions being African and Iranian women working in the beauty industry (hairdresser, beauty salons) serving their own community, as well as some Iranian women working in restaurants. In addition to gender, racial discrimination translating into body politics sharpens the segmentation and increases discrimination in the labor market as well. The traditional female migrant sector of domestic/care work is not open to refugees, especially for women of

color, as racism plays an important role. While domestic and care workers from former Soviet countries are generally preferred by employers in Turkey, due to their assumed docile nature and modern, more Western culture (which is highly associated with whiteness and Europeanness), forced migrants from Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq are assumed to be uncultured, backward, and even uncivilized and savage in the case of African refugees. A similar racial discrimination exists in the service sector as described by an Arabic translator from Somalia, ‘customers do not want to eat from plates touched by black people’.

During my research, which lasted for more than a year, I have only met one refugee woman from Iran who was legally employed as a speech therapist, a profession she had a degree in and has been working as for many years in her country of origin. In addition to her educational background, she has native level Turkish language skills. Although most refugee women, especially from Iran and African countries such as Somalia, DRC and Ivory Coast, have higher education and work experience in their home countries, the impossibility of finding work, untransferability of labor skills (Sert, 2016), the language barrier, and the risk of harassment in the workplace force women out of the labor market. In other words, illegality forces refugee women into the lowest spectrum of the segmented labor market regardless of their work experience and skill level. Moreover, while employees benefit from the lack of a work permit, and the illegality that accompanies it, for the purpose of labor exploitation in the case of men, for women, the lack of legal protection signifies the risk of harassment or sexual exploitation. Refugee women employed as shoppers or domestic/care workers lose their jobs in a short period of time, as they refuse to engage in sexual relations with their employers. The ethnic/racial and religious discrimination persists even in the case of sexual harassment. While Turkish employers force Muslim women from Iraq or Iran to engage in marriage, sexual harassment and violence against African women is generally in the form of forcing transactional sex.

#### **d) EU-Turkey Deal and Financial Assistance to Refugees through International Organizations**

##### **I) The Turkey-EU Deal: Responsibility Sharing or Readmission**

Although the EU-Turkey deal dating 2015 has been considered as a preventive response to the enormously increasing number of illegal border crossing at the Eastern border of Europe, namely between Greece and Turkey after the arrival of forced migrants from Syria to Turkey, it should be contextualized within the long-lasting EU policies of externalization of migration management and border control as well as the responsibility of sharing and/or shifting efforts to refugee protection. Due to the externalization of migration control, similar deals were made with Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Tunisia, Nigeria, Jordan and Lebanon (Niemann and Zaun, 2018) The harmonization of the Turkish migration asylum regime with the European Union’s legal framework had been discussed and gradually put in place in the context of EU-Turkey membership negotiations. However, the geographic limitation on the Geneva Convention that Turkey has been implementing remains the most debated issue related to responsibility sharing and/or shifting. Turkey’s long-lasting reluctance to lifting the geographic limitation and signing of a readmission agreement such as the Turkey-EU deal could be found in the concerns of becoming a hub for ‘unwanted migrants’ by the EU.

Nevertheless, the impact of the increasing number of forced migrants in Turkey and the illegal border crossing of not only Syrians but also other forced migrant communities such as Afghans, Iraqis, and Africans in the realization of the EU-Turkey deal is undeniable. Despite the humanitarian and protection efforts of the Turkish State, the ambiguity of legal protection



(i.e., temporary protection) as well as the lack of opportunity structures motivate forced migrants in Turkey to seek a better life and a permanent solution in Europe (Paçacı Elitok, 2019).

Following the attempts of hundreds of thousands of forced migrants to enter Europe using the Eastern Mediterranean route under increasingly dangerous conditions, and the moral panic that ensued following the death of an Iraqi refugee boy, Alan Kurdi, while crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece, the need for a more substantial and secure way of admitting refugees to Europe has been finally addressed in 2015. With the 29 November 2015 EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan (European Commission, 2015) and the 7 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement (European Commission, 2016), the European Union and Turkey agreed to a ‘one in, one out’ deal. The deal has foreseen return all new irregular migrants reaching the Greek islands after the deal, and for every Syrian who is sent back, one registered Syrian refugee in Turkey would be resettled in the EU. This way, the arrival of unauthorized migrants through illegal channels was intended to be reduced. In exchange, the deal also included a roadmap for the liberalization of visa requirements for Turkish citizens to the EU’s Schengen zone, re-energizing Turkey’s EU accession process and granting of 6 billion EUR in two installments to the Facility for Refugees in Turkey in order to fund the support and aid efforts for the Syrian refugees (İçduygu and Millet, 2016; Paçacı Elitok, 2019)

The EU-Turkey deal led to an intense debate regarding the legal protection of refugees in Turkey, namely whether Turkey is a safe country of refugees to be readmitted to. Readmission agreements only apply in the case of resending unauthorized migrants back to a safe country. The well documented limitations of the existing protection capacity in Turkey, as well as the precarious legal situation of Syrian refugees under temporary protection without a full refugee status, signifying legal protection and entitlements, as a result of the geographic limitation on the Geneva Convention raised questions related to Turkey being a safe country. In addition, the reoccurring claims of deportation, push-back, arbitrary detention and physical violence against asylum seekers in Turkey support these claims (İçduygu and Millet, 2016)

The discussions also highlighted concerns related to responsibility sharing versus responsibility shifting. While the concern regarding turning into a hub for unwanted refugees and migrants is still in place, the Turkish government’s claims regarding the reluctance of the EU to provide the monetary support to Turkey in support of refugees dominated the political debate around the Deal. In fact, according to the numbers provided by the EU Facility, a total budget of 6 billion EUR for humanitarian and development actions, 3 billion EUR for 2016- 2017 and 3 billion EUR for 2018-2019. Both installments combined, all operations funding has been committed, 4.7 billion was contracted, and more than 3,4 billion euros were disbursed.<sup>4</sup> The funding had been distributed through contracted implementing partners such as INGO’s and UN agencies who also financially support local implementing partners through project financing in addition to their own actions. The priority areas are namely: protection, health, basic needs, and education.

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<sup>4</sup> EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey, [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility\\_table.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility_table.pdf), consulted on 18 June 2020.

## II) Financial Assistance and Services for Refugees in Eskişehir

As an important satellite city hosting a considerable forced migrant community, Eskişehir hosts several local NGO's providing services such as protection and health to refugees in different capacities, supported by INGO's financing from the EU-Turkey deal. It is possible to classify these services in two categories; implementing partners of UNHCR, Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) and Human Resources Development Foundation (HRDF), and implementing partners of UNFPA, Red Umbrella and ESOGU/UNFPA women's health center.

The new Turkish Law on Foreigners and International Protection ratified in 2014 has predicted the establishment of a civic authority of migration, namely the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) and the transfer of UNHCR's responsibilities regarding the registration, protection, and resettlement of refugees in Turkey to the newly established DGMM. Gradually, the registration and protection of Syrian refugees under temporary protection in Turkey, as well as other forced migrants under international protection, has been transferred to DGMM, and UNHCR continues to fulfill its mission to protect and financially support the most vulnerable refugees.

UNHCR currently has two implementing partners in Eskişehir, Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) and Human Resources Development Foundation (HRDF). Both operating partners of UNHCR countrywide provide refugees protection services such as legal counseling and psycho-social support. In this text, I chose to address them as refugee supporting NGO's, as the term refugee NGO might also refer to organizations funded and operated by refugees themselves.

The Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) was established in 1995 in Ankara as an independent non-profit NGO to provide assistance to refugees and asylum seekers living in Turkey. Currently, ASAM has 60 offices across more than 40 provinces in Turkey. The main activities of ASAM are providing social and legal support for refugees in helping them reach their rights and services, psychosocial support, and integration related courses and activities. Similar to the general mission, ASAM Eskişehir office situated in Tepebaşı neighborhood, on the same street as the main local DGMM office, provide legal and social support to refugees, such as help with their registration with the DGMM and UNHCR, application to the financial aid schemes, providing financial assistance to those in urgent vulnerable situation, psychosocial consultations by trained psychologists, translation services in Arabic and Farsi, integration activities such as sports and arts classes and workshops for women and children, festivals where both Turkish and refugee communities get together, and very high-demand Turkish language courses. According to the legal requirements in Turkey, organizations are not entitled to organize Turkish language courses themselves but rather a trained Turkish language teacher must be appointed by the Ministry of Education. ASAM is currently the only organization providing language classes in different levels to forced migrants habiting in Eskişehir.

Human Resources Development Foundation (HRDF) is an NGO providing services to asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey nationwide as well. HRDF, founded in 1988 in order to contribute to the solution of health, education, and employment problems which have a negative impact on the development of human resources, has been implementing projects to address vulnerable populations in Turkey such as women, irregular migrants, victims of human trafficking and, finally, forced migrants. HRDF Eskişehir office, similar to ASAM, provides

socio-legal counseling, psychosocial support, translation services, and organize extra-curricular cultural events. The African dance group Old City Fire and the Iranian music band Over the Rainbow both present the best examples of these cultural events which were initiated and supported by the social workers of HRDF.

As mentioned above, both ASAM and HRDF as implementing partners of UNHCR in Eskişehir provide similar services to refugees, however, they are mostly visited by different communities of forced migrants. While ASAM is mostly visited by Iraqi refugees, HRDF is mostly visited by the French and Farsi speaking communities as well as LGBTI+ refugees from different nationalities due to the popularity and reputation of their translators for being helpful and LGBTI+ friendly. In other words, while both organizations provide exactly the same services, with the exception the Turkish language classes provided by ASAM, the translation services and the ability of social workers to provide a safe place for different communities shape their consultation patterns.

In addition to refugee-supporting NGO's which are implementing partners of UNHCR in the field, there are two organizations, the Red Umbrella Eskişehir office ESOGU/UNFPA women's health center financially supported by UNFPA.

Ankara based organization Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association (Red Umbrella) aims to raise awareness and find solutions regarding human rights violations experienced by sex workers in Turkey. In 2018, in cooperation with UNFPA, Red Umbrella, and another LGBTI+ organization, Positive Living Association, started a project entitled 'Access to Protection Services by Key Refugee Groups' financed by European Civic Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). Within the scope of the project, 5 service units in different cities of Turkey, Ankara, Denizli, Eskişehir and two in Istanbul, and a hotline was established. While service units function as places where protection activities such as case management and counseling related to sexual and reproductive health, legal assistance regarding international protection, access to support mechanisms take place, a 24/7 hotline was established to provide information about the existing services and reporting ongoing problems.

When UNHCR's appointing of forced migrants under international protection to satellite cities is examined, several patterns by nationality or refugee claims can be observed. It is well observed that refugees with LGBTI+ claims are being appointed to the most 'open-minded' satellite cities of Turkey such as Denizli, Yalova and Eskişehir in order to reduce the possible phobia the refugees might experience. As a result, Eskişehir hosts a considerable LGBTI+ refugee population mostly from Iran. Since its establishment in 2018, the Red Umbrella Office serves as a hub for LGBTI+ refugees, who are mostly divided communities by nationality as well as sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Eskişehir Osmangazi University and UNFPA Women's Health Center, which was founded in Eskişehir with financial aid from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Turkish Ministry of Health, aims to provide sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services to forced migrant girls and women from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Founded as a safe space for girls and women, the health center provides services aiming to empower and help women such as social activities, case management consultations, vocational trainings, awareness raising classes on women's issues and health services such as SRH and family planning. Being the only safe space for forced migrant girls and women in Eskişehir, the Center fulfils an important function by providing women who do not or can not leave their houses because of cultural reasons a place for socialization and empowerment.

### III) Financial Aid Schemes for Refugees in Turkey supported by the European Funding

In order to meet the basic needs of forced migrants in a vulnerable situation in Turkey, different organizations provide financial aid schemes for different target groups. For migrants who cannot find a job in the labor market, these financial aid schemes present a crucial income for their survival and livelihood.

The most prominent nationwide refugee protection scheme in Turkey is Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program<sup>5</sup>. The ESSN program, also known as Kızılay kart (Red Crescent Card) is a result of a partnership between the European Union and Turkey, implemented by IFRC, the Turkish Red Crescent and the Turkish Ministry of Family, Work and Social Services. The ESSN is known to be the biggest humanitarian project that the European Union has even funded, funding 998 million Euros by 2019, reaching out to 1.4 million refugees under international and temporary protection in Turkey.

The ESSN aid scheme provides refugee families with a debit card, which gives them access to a fixed amount of money, 120 TRY (16 euros) for each family member every month. The aid is only monetary with the assumption that refugees should be able to allocate their resources where it is the most needed, such as rent, food, medicine etc. The eligibility criteria for the ESSN aid are: being a single woman; single parent with at least one minor child, elderly people above 60 with no other adults in the family; families with three or more children; families with at least one family member with disability, and families with high level of dependents (i.e. children, elderly and disabled).

It is important to note that the aid addresses families rather than individuals, therefore the whole family qualifies for the aid or not. As an example, while a family with two parents and two children does not qualify for the ESSN, a family with two parents and three children receives the ESSN aid for 5 individuals which can be enough for a family to live on. The establishment of ESSN as a result of the ongoing ‘refugee crisis’ seems to target the biggest refugee population in Turkey, Syrian refugees under temporary protection but the scope of the aid has been expended to cover refugees under international protection as well. However, while mass migration of refugees escaping war as in the case of Syrians and Iraqis escaping from ISIS, generally result in forced displacement of extended families or families with a traditional family structure, who can qualify for the family aid, individual refugee status applicants as well as nuclear families with none or less than 3 children – which is in fact the case for many Afghans, Sub-Saharan and Iranians, with the exception of single women, cannot be eligible for the aid.

The existing research shows that the issue of at least 3 children has been stressed as a concerning issue. While there are services such as SRH and family planning available to refugees provided by the multiple organizations, the ESOGU/UNFPA Women’s Health Center in the case of Eskişehir, the criteria of 3 children of ESSN, unwillingly promotes refugee families to have more children in order to be eligible for the aid. In addition, despite the fact that the aid criteria explicitly mention single parents with children, in practice only single women are considered to be eligible for the aid. Additionally, while the program is, in fact, financed by the European Union, as a result of the EU-Turkey deal, its distribution through the Turkish Red Crescent create a misunderstanding and consequently discontent among the nationals, who believe refugees are being provided a social welfare provision nationals are not

<sup>5</sup> Emergency Social Safety Net, <http://kizilaykart-suy.org/EN/index2.html>, consulted on 18 June 2020.

entitled to.

Before ESSN, UNHCR was the main provider of financial assistance to refugees under its mandate, as a part of its protection mission. Similar to ESSN, the aim of the UNHCR cash-based intervention is to provide protection and assistance to the ‘most vulnerable’ refugees<sup>6</sup>. Vulnerability of refugees are being assessed by the UNHCR protection officers, and those who are eligible receive a monthly amount of 120 TRY (16 euros) similar to ESSN. However, as ESSN and UNHCR cash-based intervention are mutually exclusive, the number of refugees benefiting from UNHCR’s aid decreased dramatically. As a result, instead of a general vulnerability-based cash-based intervention, UNHCR Turkey is currently providing more thematic financial aid such as the trans+ aid. The trans+ aid is a new financial protection scheme of UNHCR started in November 2017 to support intersex and trans refugees. Refugees who qualify for the trans+ aid, who have such a refugee claim with UNHCR, receive an amount of 750 TRY (100 Euros) per month, six times more than ESSN.

According to UNHCR officials, the aim of the aid is providing additional financial support to transgender refugees who have more expenses than cis refugees. Transgender refugees generally have to live in more middle-class neighborhoods where rents are slightly higher, to avoid transphobic attitudes and possible security problems, and also have more expenses related to transitioning – hospital bills, travel, hormone therapy, and *passing* related expenses. In addition to the costs that may occur, transgender refugees also struggle with finding a regular income. While finding a job in the formal market is a problem for all refugees- due to the legal restrictions and hardship of obtaining a work permit, transgender refugees, especially women, have a hard time getting employed as a result of discrimination in the job market. Even for those who *pass* as belonging the gender category they identify with, the mismatch with the gender mentioned in their ID’s become a reason not to get employed. As DGMM uses previous ID documents such as passports as a reference instead of individual statements, this mismatch occurs for all those who did not go through the legal procedure of changing the gender identification in their ID’s. In addition to the difficulties of finding work, trans women also cannot benefit from various financial aid schemes targeting women such as ESSN for the same very reason.

## Conclusion

Eskişehir presents a unique case among satellite cities of Turkey as a liberal and ‘Westernized’ city going through a major transformation by deindustrialization and celebrated urban renewal. Promotion of the city as a cultural and education hub is intertwined with its progressive politics, creating the image of a welcoming city for forced migrants from various backgrounds. While Eskişehir shares some common threads with the other mid-size Anatolian satellite cities such as limited opportunity structures due to travel restrictions, it has been also chosen for the settlement of most vulnerable refugees such as LGBTI+ or SGBV victims due to its believed progressive local administration and liberal society.

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<sup>6</sup> Strengthening Protection and Access to Quality Services of Refugees with Specific Needs, <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2019/08/7.4-UNHCR-Turkey-Protection-of-refugees-with-specific-needs-Fact-Sheet-July-2019-FINALV-1.pdf>, consulted on 18 June 2020.

The obstacles to legal employment of forced migrants in Eskişehir determine migrants' involvement in the already segmented labor market from a vulnerable position, where their labor is exposed to exploitation. Gender and racial discrimination in the labor market, particularly forcing refugee women out of the even traditionally feminized domains of labor result in refugee women's dependence on financial aid. While refugee men are expected to work and provide for themselves and their families, even when the legal channels of work is closed, refugee women are considered as the real deserving subjects of humanitarian aid, mostly financed by the EU as a result of the Turkey-EU Refugee Deal.

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