"Explaining Migration Timing: Political Information and Opportunities"
Alisha Holland and Margaret Peters
Qualitative Supplementary Materials

This document includes the focus group and interview transcripts that we cite in the article. The full set of transcripts will be deposited with the Qualitative Data Repository once we have completed other articles associated with this project. The statements in italics indicate qualitative information cited directly in the paper. The sections used to substantiate the italics claims are highlighted in bold.

"Our focus groups suggested that respondents were confused because many received temporary protected status in Turkey, which they called "humanitarian asylum."

Focus Group Discussion
Profile: General Community – 6 participants
Age: 46-65
Sex: Male

Moderator: I want to start introducing myself and maybe one by one you can introduce yourselves to me… My name is xxx. I am thirty-three years old. I am married for three years. I don't have any kids. I have been working for ten years on social sphere, in NGOs and for the last three years in research industry. I am so much into women's issues in Turkey because there is inequality here in Turkey. I was born and raised in Istanbul, my mom and dad are from here as well, but I have an immigrant background. My grandfather has the Caucasian backgrounds and my mother's side is from Yugoslavia. I want to know you better, your name, how old are you, and are you working or not?

→ My name is xxx, I am working in clothes printing. I am forty-four years old. I came to Istanbul four years ago. I live with my wife and four kids.

Moderator: How old are they?

→ Three, nine, ten and eleven years old.

Moderator: Do you speak Turkish?

→ A little…

Moderator: How did you learn it?

→ By communicating with people at work…

Moderator: Thank you so much nice to meet you.

→ My name is xxx.

Moderator: Hello xxx, can you answer the same questions please?

→ I am fifty-seven years old, I work here, I clean the place.

Moderator: Where is your family?

→ I live here with my wife, I came to Turkey four months ago.

Moderator: Do you have kids?

→ Yes, I have two in Germany and one here, he is married and lives alone.

Moderator: Do you speak Turkish?

→ It's too early for me to learn the language.

Moderator: What did you study?

→ Only primary school.

Moderator: What about you?

→ To the ninth grade.

→ Okay, my name is xxx and I am forty-seven years old. I am married and I have three kids, two of them are working and one is studying, my mom lives with me because she is old.

Moderator: so, are you six people in the house?

Participant 3: Yes. I was working then I stopped six months ago because of my sickness, I have some problems with the arteries in my heart I need to go to the hospital to do some tests but I can't go because I don't have the Turkish id "Kimlik", I am doing the process to get it but it is complicated. I have the 99 number but they need the proof of residence. I went to apply for f residency permit and they asked for my Kimlik, and that's why none of the bills are in my name, they wanted a bill in my name but I don't have.

Moderator: Where were you working at?

→I worked in bread distribution, I had a car that I rented and worked for three years. I started working from the moment I arrived.

Moderator: Do you know English? Arabic? Turkish?

→ A little Turkish.

Moderator: Okay thank you. And you?

→ My name is xxx. I am fifty-five years old, I have three married daughters in Syria.

Moderator: With whom do you live here?

→ Only with my wife. I worked in Tobacco, I fill the boxes with Tobacco. I came to Turkey two years ago and we haven't got anything from any charity.

Moderator: Does your wife work?

→ My wife works at handcrafts, but the amount of money she is getting it is almost nothing.

Moderator: Thank you.

→ My name is xxx. I came to Turkey two years ago and I don't work here. I live here with my son, my daughter in law went to Germany and I am taking care of the kids. My son has 3 daughters; six, nine and thirteen years old.

Moderator: Do you speak Turkish?

→ Not at all.

Moderator: Is your house here in the neighborhood?

→ Yes.

Moderator: Thank you.

→ xxx, I am sixty-seven years old.

→ I have three sons and one married daughter. They are all studying outside the country and I am living here only with my wife. I have diabetes and some problems in my stomach, I don't have a job.

Moderator: How can you afford life expenses?

→ My kids sometimes send me money. They take part of the money that they get there and send it to me.

Moderator: When did you come here?

→ Two and a half years ago.

Moderator: Were you working in Syria?

→ No, I was retired, they stopped paying the salary.

Moderator: I want to understand first how is your life in Turkey as you have been here for two or three years on average. Can you tell me about your experience in Turkey? How is life in here so far?

→ I have been here for four months. I would like to thank the Turkish authorities for welcoming us. I had so many problems with my Kimlik, I went to the Turkish Red Crescent and they issued a Kimlik for me. I have blood pressure illness and infections in my colon. I went to the hospital and they did all the tests. I went to the ophthalmologist too and they gave me medical reports, I did all of that for free. I am really thankful for that.

→ There are so many complex processes in Turkey regarding the Kimlik, my wife is a teacher and she lost her job because of that. She had the number starting with 98 and she needed the one that starts with 99. We tried to register her in the Red cross and they refused to help because we don't have kids. We are in an age that it is really difficult to find a job.

→ The life in Turkey is easy when you have money and really difficult if you don't. I have two kids, the younger one should be in school and the other should be a freshman in university. However, they are both working in a 12-hours job, one of them is working for a Syrian businessman and the other for a Turkish businessman. Both employers have no mercy on my sons. They work without legal work permit and he can't get an insurance. My daughter is fourteen years old and she is studying here in Syrian school that has been changed to a Turkish

school in an integration program. The rents here are really high, my house is 1+1 and I am paying 1000tl per month. We are six people in the house. The owner has so much money but no mercy, she knows that Syrians can't do anything about it so she is using this fact that Syrians can't live in anywhere and we need to live in this neighborhood because it's close to our community and jobs.

Moderator: I can see that most of the problems are related to bureaucracy, Kimlik, rents, employment…

→ The rents are really high, the life is really hard here. I worked with a Turkish guy who always delays my salary without any reason. A small percentage of Turkish people feel our pain or agony here. Turkish government should try to look for families that can't afford such high rents and step up to help with the rent to some poor families by paying a small part of the rent, this is the most difficult problem which is the living conditions here.

→I came here to see my son and his daughters, and I left my kids and wife in Aleppo. The conditions here are so difficult. My son is working for twelve hours and he can't provide enough money for us. I am sick and I don't have even a Kimlik so I can't work at all. The house is 1+1 and it is 1000tl, without the bills.

→ We can't even work, nobody is letting us even work.

→ Here we are talking about problems that we caused. For example, in the beginning I lived in the house with my friend, then we brought other people to live with us and the house owner increased the rent price then.

→ I think this is an exception of the rule, most people don't do this.

→ Some of the Turkish people have the idea that we are getting assistance from the government, and that's why the owners increase the rents.

Moderator: I understand. And, what is the most positive aspect of your life in Turkey?

→ Istanbul is the most beautiful city in the world. I used to come to Istanbul four times a year as a tourist, everything is beautiful here.

Moderator: Anything else?

→ The traditions of the Turkish and Syrian people are really close.

→ You have the same rights as a Turkish person here in Turkey and you get your full rights as a foreigner, there is no racism. If you are in the Gulf countries they will not give you your full rights, they will not have a mercy because you are Syrian.

Moderator: I see. I would ask for the ones who are working currently. How did you find those jobs?

→ I found it from an acquaintance. They don't give you a job if they don't know you through someone else.

Moderator: Was he Syrian?

→ Yeah.

→ I looked for it by myself in Merter three years ago, the salary was so low and he still owes me 2000tl.

Moderator: So, did you just go and knocked the doors and asked for a job?

→ Yeah basically I went to them and told them I have experience in working with the printers.

Moderator: Was he Turkish? How did you understand what he was saying?

→ Yes, he is Turkish. My friend helped me.

→ I did maintenance work for this building and the old building so they decided to hire me. Other than that, nobody would employ me.

→ I worked in a Syrian bakery, my brother in law connected me with the owner. I worked as an accountant. Then with time, I rented a car and I started to distribute the bread. Because of the huge competition between Turkish businesses, the price of the bread became really law and I couldn't rent the car anymore. The police used to stop me a lot. Because I wasn't the owner of the car. They used to give them bride just like in Syria to make me pass.

→ I think the police started to learn how to take the bribe from the Syrians.

Moderator: Turkish people do this as well... So I understand some of you got the work from their network and some found it themselves. What do you think when I say government assistance?

→ I think the governmental help should be related to the house rent.

→ I think they should help the family that has kids, and the provider is sick or can't work.

→ I am sick and my wife is sick. My kids are away. My kids are sending us money but it is never enough.

Moderator: So for you it is healthcare, rents, housing…?

→ I think people who are sick should be cared for to get some kind of help.

Moderator: Ok so is there any of you who is receiving government assistance?

→ They are saying that when you get the kimlik the Red Crescent can help. They will study the situation and they will decide.

→ I am not receiving assistance but they are saying that you must be older than 60 years old to receive it. I went there but they didn't accept me.

Moderator: Where did you apply?

→ The center that is behind Odapaşa cami, the red crescent for helping foreigners. You must be more than 60 years. Or they if they have 1 handicapped child. Or if they have 3 kids younger than 18.

Moderator: Is there anyone who is receiving any assistance? Or any support from the civil society?

→ I once received 1 box that contains some food. And 2 years and a half in the Sumbul mosque they distributed a box that contains food.

→ They are distributing food boxes to kids in the school. My daughters in school they are giving them food boxes…

Moderator: Have you heard of other countries that assist Syrians more than Turkey?

→No, I never heard.

→ The Gulf countries didn't even accept us to enter the country and Turkish people welcomed us. They were the only ones that welcomed us.

→ Most of the help that the Syrians get is paid by the Turkish government here. But for Lebanon and Jordan, the money comes from the Gulf countries, not their governments. And every while you would hear that more than 100 trucks (food and medication) entered to Syria from Turkey.

Moderator: Anyone has another opinion or wants to mention another country?

→ For my kids in Germany the German government is giving him a house and a salary and a transportation card. And for the summer now they made the younger one goes to travel, and the older one they hired him in a high paying job in a company.

Moderator: So, do you believe that they are doing a better work?

→I believe due to the lower number of Syrians there they are doing better.

Moderator: Do you consider yourselves as refugees?

Participant 4: I don't consider myself as a refugee. I consider myself as I am in Syria I have a normal life. My only problem here is the expenses in this country.

Moderator: What about you?

→ Freedom and safety… We don't have all of these things in Syria.

Moderator: Who is a refugee for you?

→ I left my country to seek safety. I consider Turkey here as my country.

Moderator: And you?

→ No. Because I am getting the respect and the appreciation. In general, people are good. People who consider Syrians as bad people, when they understand Syrians more they see better.

Moderator: What makes a person be refugee?

→ A refugee is a person that comes here because of the killings and murders and who ran away from war.

→ I was welcomed here so I never felt as a refugee.

→ For me, I am going to be a bit different from the previous opinions. I have 4 kids and we were talking about the help. I registered in the Red Crescent 8 months ago. I consider myself as a refugee. There was a war in my country and I refuge to this country.

→ Of course, I am a refugee. I don't have the same right as a Turkish person. If I had a resident permit I wouldn't consider myself as a refugee. I have limited freedom here and I am not like the Turkish people.

→ Syrians here are divided into 2 groups. People who have the permit and people who have the refugee permit. People who have the residency permit they have money and they can work they don't feel like a refugee. But we consider ourselves as a refugee.

Moderator: Let's talk about the journey to Istanbul. Did you consider to go to another country other than Turkey? Europe for example?

→ We were coming to Turkey. If we were going to go to another country we will lose a lot. We wanted a Muslim country.

Moderator: Can you raise your hands if you considered only to come to Turkey?

Moderator: 4 of you raised their hands.

→ I was considering going to Turkey for a year then going back to Syria. When the people started to go to Europe I also consider it but I didn't have the money.

→ My goal was going to do an interview in the German embassy then go to Germany because my sons are in Germany. They gave him a year residency permit for my son to stay there and he needs to get 3 years to be able to do reunification for his family.

→ All of us are still thinking of going back to Syria.

Moderator: Do you feel you had good information about Turkey before coming to Turkey?

→ I knew that they didn't talk Arabic or English. I had a big problem the first time I came to the airport when I couldn't ask or understand what they are saying and the information center got angry because I couldn't speak Turkish. I was really surprised that they didn't know how to speak English.

Moderator: Did you have any idea about the living standards, the expenses, the regulations?

→ I had an idea about the law and the situation because I used to visit Turkey every year before the war.

→ I used to come to Urfa before. The life there in Urfa was very simple compared to Istanbul. Istanbul was really different and I had no idea about it before I come.

Moderator: Anyone got information before from other people about the life here in Turkey? From websites? Or from civil society organizations, charities?

→ My son was here 5 years before I came and my wife was here 2 years ago. They told me about it before I came.

Moderator: Some of you have relatives in Europe. Who has relatives there and in which countries?

→ I had relatives there before the war.

→ I have my 2 sons there in Germany.

Moderator: Are they happy?

→ Yes they are. The young one is really sad about his mother only.

Moderator: Are you communicating with them?

→ Yeah, every day.

→ My elder brother in Sweden and I am communicating with them using WhatsApp. They are not using other social media tools.

→ I have my aunt and her kids in Germany before the war.

→ My daughter has been in Germany for 2 years now and her kids are here.

Moderator: Do you communicate with her?

→ Yes via phone.

→ I have 2 sons in Belgium.

Moderator: The people in Europe do they talk about the things they wish they knew in Europe? Do they mention this to you?

→ My sister is in the USA for 28 years and she never said this. My brother in Sweden too. The first phase he told me it is cold and there is no work. But now he is telling me I wish everybody can go and work here. I have 4 nephews in Thailand too.

Moderator: Do they say we wish we knew more about the culture? The education system?

→ My brother in Sweden was surprised that the language is difficult his English is good though. He has problems with the process of reunification with his wife and kids who lives here in Turkey.

→ My daughter in law is trying for the past 2 years for reunification. She is in Germany. She got only 1-year resident permit that's why she can't get it.

Moderator: Did any of the people you know come back from Europe?

→ The aunt of my wife is trying to return to Turkey because she didn't like the life there. She is living in the suburb which is really hard for her because she is used to living here in Istanbul. And she misses the Islamic traditions and the life here because it was similar to Syria.

→ I know more than 50 families that wanted to go back but they are stuck in Greece and the Turkish police are not letting them enter.

→ I have a daughter living in Canada for the past 6 years and she told me she would like to prefer to live here in Turkey more than any place in the world.

Moderator: Let's compare the lives of people living in Europe in the people living here in Turkey, who is living a better life? And what is good there and what is good here?

→ Their life there is better in terms of living standards. The government is paying for everything but here it is not like that. People there have to live alone without any social life but here it is more traditional life close to us with Islamic traditions.

→ Our eastern society is warm and we like to socialize and they don't have this there in Europe and the western life is massively different and for us it is bad.

→ In Europe, the son is getting a house and the wife is getting a separate house. This is leading to the separation of the family leading to the separation of society.

Moderator: So you were the only one who tried to go to Europe after you came to Turkey. Is there anyone else?

→ I tried in the beginning then I forgot about it.

Moderator: Why, what happened?

→ I felt they are going to give you a palace in the middle of the desert and I am going to live alone there.

Moderator: Did you try to make any kind of applications to go there?

→ No.

Moderator: And you?

→ I didn't try because I didn't have the money to go out or send any of my kids.

Moderator: Did anyone try to make an application?

→ My daughter asked me to go to Canada but I didn't want to go. Because I don't want to go. Here it is closer to Syria.

Moderator: In 2015 there was an increase in migration of Syrians from Turkey to Europe. From your perspective, what is the reason for this increase?

→ I heard that the Turkish government will deport all the Syrians back to Syria that's why my son ran to Europe.

→ There wasn't enough jobs here.

Moderator: So, what was special about 2015?

→ I would rather go there and I think that people went there because they always wanted to go and the door was open in 2015. People wanted to go even before the war.

→ I have the same opinion.

→ There was an agreement between Europe and Turkey that will allow refugees to come because of the high pressure of refugees in Turkey. This was useful to Turkey economically because of the huge number that came to get smuggled they came and they spent money here.

→ I heard the speech of Angela Merkel that they will close the borders and the will pay Turkey 3 billion to close the borders and help them to integrate.

Moderator: Do you think that the smuggling activity increased in 2015? Or something else?

→ If I wanted people to go to Europe why did I let all those people go on such a dangerous road to get them there? They could've chosen the people and took them with Turkish ferries. The mafias who took all this money why did they all get all that money. Why did they let 4000 people get drown in the sea?

Moderator: What are your expectations about the future? What would you expect your lives would be in 2018?

→ We hope every Syrian would be ok and the war would be over and we can go back to Syria.

→ I hope we can go back to our country in the fastest way possible. I hope that the Turkish government looks at the talented people and the smart people who can make something from nothing and be creative.

Moderator: Can you be more specific and the answers can be more personal for you. I am curious about your wishes and expectations?

→ Compared to the past 4 years I am more relaxed and comfortable because I understand the language and learned lots of things.

Moderator: Do you want to learn Turkish in the next year for example?

→ I really wish that my kids can continue their study because they lost their future. And I hope Syria would be peaceful again.

Moderator: Do you want to stay here or do you want to go somewhere else? Can you raise your hands?

Moderator: Only one?

→ I belong to my country and my land and if I can't Turkey would be my second choice.

Moderator: Who wants to stay here and do not want to go to Europe?

Moderator: 2 people?

→ I want to go only for my wife and my kids and my daughters who are in Syria and I would only want to go back to them.

Moderator: Why do you want to stay in Turkey?

→ Nice people. Good government. Respectful. Islamic country. Wherever you go you would be happy.

→ I am not saying I will stay here for life. I am only saying I am not going to Europe but I would want to go back to my country.

Moderator: Why?

→ I can't live in Europe because of different cultures and different traditions. I would like to stay here because I am happy here.

Moderator: Who wanted to leave and go elsewhere?

→ I would want to go to Canada or Holland because I have relatives there. My brother is encouraging me to go out there. For me, I want to go just for the future of my kids. I would prefer Canada because I know English. My neighbor is there now. They chose him because he is Christian and the churches there chosen him.

→ For me, I would like to go Germany because of my kids who are living there. If I have them here I would prefer to stay here.

→ I didn't raise my hand because I am here for the past 4 years and my life is still the same. I have kids now and I am thinking about him. I would like to go to Belgium because I have many relatives there.

Moderator: Do you only have intentions to go or are you planning on it?

→ I am only thinking but I didn't do anything.

→ My son applied to the court there and we have lawyers there in Germany for both kids to get me there.

→ I didn't do any practical moves. I am only intending to go. I registered in Esenler in an organization for resettlement.

Moderator: When do you plan to go?.

→ Depends on them if they accept me or not.

Moderator: The ones who plan to stay do you have any plans to stay here?

→ We don't have jobs or plans. We are just waiting until the war ends and we can go back.

Moderator: Is it the same with you?

→ I don't have a plan. But one day we will go back to Syria.

Moderator: At some point have you ever think about living in a different country?

→ I never thought about it. My sister wanted me to go with her but I refused to go there. She even told me she will pay my trip.

Moderator: Why?

→ I told you I don't want to live in a different place with a different culture.

Moderator: Did you receive any information on how to live in another country? And if so where did you get this information?

→ All our relatives are saying the salaries are high and they are giving them houses and lots of things.

→ The same.

Moderator: Do you know what resettlement is?

→ It means like a citizenship. They will give us the citizenship. They are giving it to people who have university degrees. Doctors, teachers, and engineers.

Moderator: Did you apply?

→ We had no idea about applying to that because we don't have any degree.

Moderator: Do you have any idea about the legal context of staying in Turkey?

→ No.

Moderator: Do you know what asylum is?

→ In Europe, it is political asylum but in Turkey, we don't know what is it.

→ It is a humanitarian asylum in Turkey. It is the only country that accepted us. We love Turkey and Turkish people.

Moderator: You told us some people apply for political reasons. Where did you hear about that?

→ We used to hear about that. People go to Europe and they apply for this. Even if he is a normal citizen he tells them he is a political asylum seeker for them to be accepted.

Moderator: The ones who plan to go; you told me about the countries you want to go and the reasons you wanted to go. The family members you have there. For you when you select a country to live in what are the factors you take into consideration? What are the criteria?

→ We don't have criteria. We choose countries that are not racist and don't have any problems with us. And we choose it according to the living standards and the salaries.

→ For me, it is enforced on me I can't choose the country. My sons are there that's why I am going there.

Moderator: If you had the choice what are the reasons would you choose for?

→ I would choose Canada because I worked with them for 15 years and they were nice people and good people. I worked with them in a company.

Moderator: Is there anything else?

→ I chose Belgium because my relatives are there.

→ A place that I can work with my profession.

Moderator: With whom do you discuss these plans?

→ I would discuss this with myself, my wife and my children. When you are 50 you would make it with your wife.

Moderator: Who are the people who would affect these decisions?

→ The kids.

Moderator: Anybody else?

→ Nobody else.

Moderator: Where do you gather the information about resettlement?

→ For me, I am getting the information from my relatives in the Netherlands and they are telling me about the conditions there. They don't have any racism there his wife wears the scarf and nobody is telling them anything.

Moderator: What about you?

→ I used to work for Shell in the Gulf countries and I used to talk with lots of Europeans back then.

Moderator: I mean the information about the asylum seeking and resettlement, where do you gather it?

→ There are people there in Germany who are taking care of the kids there and pointing them on what to do and how to do it. His neighbor there is helping him and telling him what to do. Every district there they have people there to help them. Sometimes they point them to the church to help them.

Moderator: If I ask have you applied for resettlement?

→No, not at all.

→ I applied through the organization that I told you about.

Moderator: if I ask, what is resettlement as a procedure, do you know how does it happen?

→ No I don't...

→ We should have a son who has a 3 years permit.

Moderator: I mean resettlement, not reunification…

→ People who don't have a political asylum for 3 years can't do the reunification.

Moderator: Do you know what does asylum means as a concept?

→ The judge should be convinced that you are threatened and you can't go back to Syria. They were asking me how your son was walking in Syria without an ID. He had only his passport. They were asking him how you were going to the city without an ID. Then he gave them a paper as an ID and they accepted it.

Moderator: Who can get asylum in your perspective?

→ It depends on the person is oppressed in his own country he can get asylum. They can only come for political reasons not like here in Turkey because the people here come for humanitarian reasons.

Moderator: So you are saying there are 2 types. What about you?

→ I have the same opinion.

Moderator: When you go to the country that you plan to go, will you work there?

→ Of course.

→ The government assistance will push you to go to work and then the assistance will stop. There are language schools which are free. They will help you until you learn the language and you can start working. Then you will start paying taxes like anyone else.

Moderator: How do you expect to find a job there?

→ You learn the language and in my profession there are lots of companies that need employees.

→ It depends on the person. If he has a good profession like a mechanic, any company would accept him. My friend is working for 2200 euros in Europe.

Moderator: Do you think you can work legally there?

→ According to the laws of that country of course.

Moderator: How long do you think you will be allowed to stay in Europe?

→ If you are a political asylum seeker they give you a 3-year residency then a permanent visa.

→ People who are going to Europe is like gambling anything is possible it is like going in a space ship anything can happen. There is like a million people went there. You can't know what will change. Nobody can expect what will happen.

Moderator: Do you think you will be able to move from one European country to another?

→ The political asylum you can move but if you have the humanitarian you can't.

→ As soon as you get the permit you are free to go to any country even the USA.

→ Those who get the political asylum they get a passport and a residence card.

Moderator: I have one final question to all of us. Thank you all for all the information you have shared up until now. Do you think the other countries have duties towards refugees?

→ They don't have duties. But from a humanitarian point of view, they have to help. The duties lie in the Gulf countries. For example Turkey, because we have common values, traditions they help, but the western countries are helping just for humanitarian reasons.

→ The most important thing is that, we are accepting what happened to us. For us, we care about the new generation and their future. They suffered enough and these countries should interfere and help to make sure that the second generation can live better lives. Those are the hope for us.

→ People who go to Europe can travel to any place. But people here in Turkey are like prisoners they can't even go back to their country because the country tells them if you are going to go you can't go back until 5 years.

Moderator: This is all I wanted to ask, thank you so much. I am so pleased to meet you all.

→ We are so pleased to see you too…

"Our qualitative research reaffirmed that migrants were frustrated that "Arab countries closed their borders."

Interview with Community Leader Nr. 1
Profile: HR Consultant / Trainer
Age: 42
Sex: Male

Moderator: Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

→I am currently working in an NGO as an HR Manager and give lectures in business. I left Syria in 2014.

Moderator: Why did you choose Turkey?

→I held a Syrian passport, and that limits my choices. I cannot go to Europe by it, unless I smuggled in the sea. **I cannot go to the Gulf with it.** Turkey was one of the 2 countries that I could go and it was the best choice for me because the Turkish situation was very stable and there were already a lot of Syrians are living in Turkey that time. My family still in Syria, my father, mother and sister. They still in Damascus which relatively safer than other areas.

Moderator: How is your experience living in Turkey so far?

→The people here are very kind. They seem that they are not interested or good, but inside they are kind and they have a passion with people who give them honesty in a direct way. I am very comfortable. But the one issue to tell is the language barrier. When you live in some areas like Hatay and Gaziantep you may communicate in Arabic and connecting with people who speak Arabic. But when you go to the north like Istanbul and around areas, they stuck in their language and not all people can speak Arabic or English there.-Turkish language is not an easy language to learn, because of the mixture between languages and it is hard to follow. For example, I know many words but I cannot form a sentence. But it seems very like the modern Syrian cities like Aleppo or Damascus here, people are the same, they are kind and passionate. And it has a lot of similar facilities to the Syrian cities so people can live in similar way in Turkey to Syria.

Moderator: What is the most positive aspect for being in Turkey in your opinion?

→I would say people's places and culture.

Moderator: When I say government assistant, what comes to your mind?

→For me, I entered the country in a legal way. I came by plane. So the thing that I got from the government is my residence permit. So I can go and back and I can identify myself and this helps in many aspects. So, you semi-feel that you are integrated in the society or in the public of Turkish. About housing, schooling, healthcare provided by government. It is good and they treat people well here.

Moderator: What do you think about civil society assistance?

→I never get any charities. Because from the first day here I work in the NGO here and I am earning my salary accordingly. But I know that there is a lot of NGOs who give healthcare for Syrians, and it helps for a certain level.

Moderator: How well do you think that Turkish government assists Syrians in Turkey?

→Well, for example they give them the things that Syria's neighbor countries do not give. They give them good living conditions according to conditions inside Syria. So I think they are doing well. But issue that sometimes there is a limitation for that support. For example the visa issue, one and a half years ago people were coming easily to Turkey, but now they need a visa to come. In my opinion, I think the problem is that they that people are using Turkey to go to Europe afterwards. So Turkish authorities wanted to limit this and make visa limitations for Syrians.

Moderator: Have you heard about other governments that are doing better than what Turkey is doing to assist Syrians in these areas?

→I cannot compare. I do not know what is better and what is not. For example if you go to Europe they will give you a shelter, a residency maybe. I do not know a lot. But what I know is that I am very comfortable. Maybe because I am working. Maybe if I am not working I will have another prospective.

Moderator: Are there any type of assistance that Syrians should get and they still are not getting? Which area do you think need more assistance?

→I think Syrians need to work. If they got opportunities to work, this will help them to integrate into the Turkish society.

Moderator: Are there Syrians around you who are seeking jobs or thinking that finding job would be effective?

→Yes. It will be very beneficial for them.

Moderator: Why do you think that Syrians cannot find jobs?

→I think first it is the language barrier. Second, the legal situation of Syrians here. For some people they do not have a residency document. The legal papers I mean.

Moderator: Do you think yourself as a refugee? What does the word Refugee mean to you?

→Well I don't think of myself as a refugee. I came here by my own only to work and earn money, because in my country I was broken and the business was low and everything was getting high in prices. So I came here as a job seeker not as a refugee. In my opinion, a refugee who is running from his country for reasons like war or political issues and he or his family won't be safe in his country, and he goes beyond the borders just to be safe in another country.

Moderator: What is your main aspiration in your life for the near future?

→For me I was looking for a job in any reputed international company which works in Istanbul or Turkey in general. Just to try also to go more deep inside the Turkish society and have a good job.

Moderator: Do you plan to stay in Turkey or go elsewhere?

→Well we say, you have to stay in the place where you earn money in. So wherever I have a job I will stay.

Moderator: When you left Syria, have you considered going to any other place like Europe?

→Yes. Because I can speak German and I was planning to go to Germany. I can speak a little French as well and I thought of going there. But I am very comfortable in German so I would have a job easier in Germany. But unfortunately I couldn't make it to there and I stayed in Turkey.

Moderator: Why did not you make it to Germany?

→I tried to get a visa and it was hard because I had to do a lot of paper work. The other way was to go by sea smuggling from country to country to reach there, and actually I cannot dare to live as a refugee and I can't jeopardize my life and health just to go to Germany. So mainly because of the paper work I did not make a visa.

Moderator: What are the countries that you would consider to go if you find the job that you want to do?

→Any country which can speak English, French or German would be an option for me.

Moderator: Are there any other factors you take in consideration to choose a country to live for you?

→Yes, Economy. For example everybody knows that Turkey's economy is booming, so if you compare with other countries you see that Turkey is better in this.

Moderator: What about issues like Democracy or Human Rights? Are those are important issues to consider to choose a country for you?

→It is. But it is not my priorities because I don't think of those when I consider living in another country. And I have lived in the worst country talking about these issues.

Moderator: Is the geographical location is a factor you consider as well?

→ I think yes. For example, when you go deep south or deep north, you kind of lose your compass.

Moderator: Where do you gather your information about resettlements to other countries?

→Sometimes friends. Sometimes news or websites.

Moderator: Have you ever gathered information regarding the legal context of resettlement in other countries?

→Yes you can say that. But it was not the main issue because I know that the situation of the Syrians in many countries is bad and they are not accepted.

Moderator: Who do you ask for legal contexts?

→My friends who live there. I have friends who have been living there in Germany for 3 or 5 years.

Moderator: Do you think that the government of Germany for example helps migrants to settle?

→I do not know, I did not go deep in these areas of information. But what I know that they receive a lot of Syrians and they are trying to get their life settings there.

Moderator: Do you think the Syrians in your surroundings are satisfied with their current life in Turkey?

→Most of them I would say yes. Because it is very easy if we compare the situation in Syria and in Turkey. And here in Turkey there is no war or economic problems or security problems.

Moderator: From your prospective, what caused this increase of migration of Syrians to Europe in 2015?

→Because they know that the war is going on and there is no way back. And especially young men they knew if they stay in Syria they will be killing other people. So they want to go away from the war zone in Syria.

Moderator: Do you think that the European Policy has changed? And how?

→Yes. They want to reduce the refugees that come to Europe.

Moderator: Do you think that smugglers have a role in that increase in 2015?

→No, they are just opportunists. They know that there is a demand and they go for it. They did not create the demand.

Moderator: Do you have Syrian friends who lives in Europe? And how do you think their lives are compared to Syrians in Turkey?

→The people who were working in Turkey they were more comfortable. The people who were not working in Europe they are more comfortable because they have shelter and houses and they are given opportunities to work. Generally I think it is the same situation for Syrians who lives in Europe and Turkey.

Moderator: Do you think that people who went there in 2015, they had a previous knowledge about how their situation would it be in Europe?

→I don't think so. Most of them don't because most of them they just wanted to run away. And generally they act on rumors as well.

Moderator: In you surrounding, what are main aspiration of Syrians for their near future?

→I think most of them they want to go back to Syria. It is because homesickness or nostalgia.

Moderator: Have they told you that they want to go to other countries?

→No they have not.

Moderator: When choosing a country to settle, which factors do they take into consideration?

→Earning money and feeling safe.

Moderator: What are other factors that people consider to choose a country to resettle?

→I don't know. Apart from previous 2 reasons I don't know.

Moderator: Do some of the people you know come back from Europe?

→ As far as I know, no.

Moderator: Who do you think are the main people that affect their decisions?

→There is no single source, there are multiple sources. Everybody has his own sources. One of my friend who is in France, he went there because his family is there. Yes I can say that they follow their families.

Moderator: Do you think that Syrian people in Turkey have enough knowledge about their choices on future countries for resettlements?

→No. I don't think so. There is no trusted or main channel to get such information. And everyone use their own sources.

Moderator: So, where do you think people are getting these information?

→I told you there are many sources. No single source. They have friends, social media, papers, family, news, etc….

Moderator: Do you think that people know about the legal contexts for this? And why do you think there is this information gap?

→No. because again, there is no one trusted source for this information.

Moderator: What is a trusted source?

→A trusted source is a source that they can apply for or ask for and get the right answers, not expectations. There is no call center or hotline or Syrian society for resettlement.

Moderator: Do you think that Syrian people have knowledge about the general life about employment, government assistance or general issues?

→No. because again, they have their own sources and they don't go for one trusted source.

Moderator: What can be done to ease this process for the ones who plan to go?

→I don't know. Maybe some governmental or semi -governmental or social centers like organizations and people go and have information. I don't know if they have to be government related or not. But what is important is to be trusted.

Moderator: Do you think that other governments have duties towards refugees? And what kind of duties you think they have?

→Yes. Arabic countries. All kind of duties you can think about, aid, shelter, residency, the right to work, the right to learn and education. I said Arabic countries first because they are our own blood and flesh and they can speak our language. We have the same culture, history, names, ethnics, religion and education.

Moderator: What about other countries apart from Arabic countries? Do they have duties?

→From my prospective, No.

Moderator: Have you ever heard about an agreement between EU and Turkey on the mobility of migrants and what do you think about it?

→It is aone to one agreement. And if they catch refugees are crossing they send them back to Turkey and take one legally instead. That is what I know about it.There are monitoring aspects for those procedures like providing money to Turkey.

Moderator: Did you hear about it as well? Do you think these payments from EU is enough for Europe as their duty for refugees?

→Yes but I did not go in details. And I don't know about if it is enough, the payments, you have to ask a legal specialist.

Moderator: Thank you so much, this is all I wanted to ask.

→Thank you.

Focus Group Discussion
Profile: General Community – 6 participants
Age: 18-25
Sex: Female

Moderator: My name is xxx, I am 27 years old and I am married. I was born and raised in Istanbul. My family is from the Eastern part of Turkey but I've always lived in Istanbul and as I told you I study in IPSOS. In my free time, I mostly watch films and TV series.

Moderator 2: Thank you so much for coming. I am xxx, I work in IPSOS and I love to do studies on women specifically. I also love to be part of the women organizations and civil society groups. Thank you so much for coming today. I am 33 years old. I studied university here in Istanbul. I was born and raised here. I would also like to mention that I only speak Turkish and English, unfortunately not Arabic. If you know languages other than Arabic please mention so that we know. As xxx said she will ask the main questions but sometimes if I'm so excited I may also jump in and add some questions. And I think that's it, thank you.

Moderator: Now we would like to know you a bit better. I'm going to start with you for example and ask you some questions and the others will answer the same questions in the first round so that xxx will not be translating all the time, because the questions are pretty straight forward in this part, about your life and where are you from etc. Let's start with you, what's your name?

→ My name is xxx.

Moderator: with whom do you live in Turkey?

→ Me, my husband and my daughter.

Moderator: When did you come to Turkey?

→ Two years ago.

Moderator: Do you work in here?

→ No, I don't have a job, I only work here in the center.

Moderator: Since when? In which workshop?

→ For six months. In crochet workshop.

Moderator: And do you know Turkish?

→No.

Moderator: Okay, nice to meet you!

→ Me too.

Moderator: You?

→ My name is xxx, I have been here for two years. I don't work.

Moderator: Are you looking for a job?

→ Right now, no. I live here with mother and brother.

Moderator: Are you going to school or did you finish school?

→ I am preparing to go to university here in Turkey.

Moderator: What do you want to study?

→ May be business administration.

Moderator: Okay, nice to meet you too. Welcome.

→ I am xxx. I have been in Istanbul for two years.

Moderator: xxx, are you Turkman or did you learn Turkish here? Is it your native language?

→ I am Turkman.

→ My name is xxx. I live here with my husband and his family and I have a child. I don't speak Turkish and I don't work.

Moderator: How old is your child?

→ one year.

→ My name is xxx, and I live here with my family. I have been here for nine months.

Moderator: And where were you before?

→ Iraq, and I don't work here.

→ My name is xxx. I have been in Turkey for two year and eight months. I live with my father, mother and my two kids. I don't work.

Moderator: Have you ever worked in Syria?

→ No.

Moderator: Did anyone of you use to work in Syria?

→(All participants) No.

Moderator: Nice to meet you all. This time I will ask you questions one by one, but it will not be like that all the time, sometimes I will ask a question to all of you and if you have answers you can raise your hand and start talking. The only rule is to listen to each other, okay? So, some of you are here for four years and some of you more. I want to know how is your life in Turkey since you came here.

→ Life is good here, everything is available. But we still feel like in exile, we struggle with the language. Our life back in Syria was simpler, we could communicate easily and reach health service fast for example, life here is more difficult.

Moderator: What makes you feel you're in exile? Other than this language barrier?

→ My family is not here.

Moderator: By the way I forgot to ask you something, how many of you have temporary protection ID (kimlik) in Turkey?

→(All participants) all of us.

Moderator: Why did you apply for it?

→(All participants) to have residency permit.

→ I have a tourist residency permit.

Moderator: Why?

→ Temporary protection ID is only for Syrians.

Moderator: And those who has Kimlik, why did you apply for it?

→ Because we can use Turkish hospitals and have treatments with it. This is the main reason.

→ Also, to register our children in schools. Also for vaccines for kids.

Moderator: Health and education are the main reasons, are there any other reasons?

→ I couldn't give vaccine to my child because there was no Kimlik. It's very important.

Moderator: Do any of your kids or family members haven't got Kimlik?

→ My brothers don't have Kimlik.

Moderator: Why?

→ They applied in last January but they didn't get it yet.

Moderator: Going back to our question, xxx told us that she felt in exile, who else has this feeling or do you want to share any other feelings about here?

→ I feel the same... The situation is difficult and we don't have our family by our side.

Moderator: This language problem, how do you see its impact on your daily life? Which areas do you feel this problem?

→ When you don't know the language it's hard to communicate with anyone here, you can't reply back in the street, on daily life.

→ For me, I speak the language. I have good relationship with my neighbors, even my kids stay at their house sometimes.

Moderator: What is your biggest challenge for you in Turkey since you came here?

→ Back in home we used to live in our own house. However, it's difficult here. The rents are very expensive and our economic situation is hard. Here we have to stay with two families in one house. In Syria, it was enough for the family when only the man works.

Moderator: How many of you work? How do you afford the life here?

→ As I told you. We many families live in one house so that we can afford the rents.

Moderator: Who are married here? I see four of our participants married.

→ I have similar difficulties. The life expanses are too high. Most of us have the same situation.

Moderator: Do you have anything to add xxx?

→ Mostly the same, language barrier and economic situation.

Moderator: Speaking of language, do you understand part of Turkish language or you totally don't know?

→ Two of us understand. For me I understand what I hear but I can't really answer everything. I want to add something, I had a Turkish course of the first level, but after I finished I could not practice the language with Turkish people so it wasn't useful for me. In most of our daily life we communicate with Syrians, so we don't have the chance to practice.

Moderator: Which course did you go to?

→ Private.

Moderator: We talked about your challenges, let's talk now about positive sides if you want to mention any. What are the most positive sides of life in here, Turkey?

→ Safety is the most positive thing. This is the big difference between Syria and Turkey now. I like the life here because of what I saw back home, I don't wish to go back during these bad days in Syria. Yes, it is an exile, but the safety I found here makes me feel comfortable.

→ Most of us have the same conditions. Also, the health service is easily reached.

→ Also, it's comfortable to deal with people here. In Syria, we were afraid to deal with anyone because of the war and military situation.

Moderator: By the way, please don't hesitate to criticize Turkey or Turkish people just because we are Turkish. We are not here only to listen the compliments about Turkey, you can say whatever you want to say. Many of you talked about some economic problems compared to Syria. Did any of you tried to find a job?

→ Me, I have been here for two years, I used to work in marketing and it was very hard. I was planning to go to university when I came here, but it turns out that it's more difficult than I thought because I have to afford my life expenses.

Moderator: Where did you work?

→ In a company in Taksim. It is online service for universities.

→ I am also looking for a job. But it should be at home because I can't leave my children alone. Maybe handcrafts.

Moderator: And have you found something?

→ Yeah, I do some embroidery work.

Moderator: How did you find it?

→ A friend of mine helped me.

→ As for me, I also can't work outside my house because of my children. I worked in knitting clothes at home.

→ I also work at home. My husband is unemployed. I get little money from working at home and I can't depend on to it to afford my expenses. I am trying to become a hairdresser, now I am working for my neighbors and doing some practice with them and later I can expand my work.

Moderator: How do you learn it?

→ In a salon.

Moderator: How did you find it? Is it around here?

→ From the internet. Yes, it's in Fatih.

Moderator: Are the owners of the salon Turkish?

→ No, Syrians.

Moderator: Does anyone of you receive any type of government assistance?

→(All participants) No.

Moderator: What does government assistance mean to you?

→(All participants) money and may be food supplies.

Moderator: Does any of you have KIZILAY (Turkish Red Crescent) card?

→(All participants) We heard of it and we applied but we got rejected from Ankara.

Moderator: Did they tell you about the reason of rejection?

→(All participants) no, you can't ask.

→ My relatives got accepted to receive KIZILAY card, probably because they have four children. But I think they should also consider other families even with one child because we are in need.

Moderator: Do you have any assistance from charities, associations, civil organizations?

→(All participants) no.

→ I take cards for food from a Syrian charity as my kids are orphans.

Moderator: What's the name of the charity?

→ It's an office which helps orphans.

Moderator: What's the amount of the cards?

→ 75 TL

Moderator: Have you heard about governments that do more than Turkey to assist Syrians?

→Germany and Netherlands maybe

Moderator: Why do you think so? What do they offer more?

→ In Turkey, we have to do everything by ourselves, for the house, kids and rents. However, in Germany or Netherlands, once you arrive there you can have a house and they send people to schools to learn the language. In the same time, they provide salaries and a place to stay in.

Moderator: How did you hear about this?

→ My husband's uncle told us about this.

→ I hear it from my brother and sister who are in Germany. They are learning the language there and getting salaries, their life is normal and much better than here.

Moderator: Do you have Turkish language courses here provided by the government?

→(Most of the participants) No.

→ I heard there's one in Ankara.

Moderator: Is it for free?

→ Yes.

Moderator: Most of you don't speak Turkish, when you go to a governmental institution, how do you deal with that? Do you ask for a help of another person?

→ We usually go with someone who speaks Turkish.

→ We went by ourselves to Turkish KIZILAY and they refused to see our papers and apply. Then we went with a Turkish friend who helped us and they accepted to see our papers immediately, but in the end, we got rejected. Other families were accepted, they have similar situation to us, but we don't know why we were rejected.

Moderator: Do you think of yourselves as refugees?

→ (Most of participants) Yes.

Moderator: What does the word refugee mean to you?

→ It's not my birth country, but I don't really feel like a refugee here, I'm depending on myself here not on the Turkish government. I am paying for the rent and my life expenses. **Of course, we are thankful for the Turkish government for welcoming us here and opening their hands for us in contrast to the Arab countries which closed their borders. I mean in the end we are not receiving a direct assistance like other countries offer, we're living on our own labor and efforts.**

Moderator: So, in this regard a refugee is someone who depends on the government, is that what you mean?

→ Of course. People in Sweden or Germany are receiving assistance from the government, so they are considered refugees because they are depending on the governments. We are depending on ourselves. Back in Syria when Palestinian people fled to Syria we offered them land and thought of them as we are all one people, we did not consider them as refugees.

Moderator: So, according to xxx, a refugee is someone who receives governmental assistance. What are your thoughts on this?

→ When we go to the hospital, sometimes they don't accept or welcome us if we don't have a translator. This morning a doctor in the hospital did not accept us because we don't have a translator.

Moderator: Is there anybody who disagrees with Mona? Because when I first asked, some of you said yes.

Moderator: Let me put it this way. When you said "yes, we're refugees", what were you thinking?

→ Since we fled from our country, people see us as refugees, but we don't consider ourselves as refugees.

Moderator: Do you feel uncomfortable when someone calls you refugee?

→(Most of the participants) No.

→ It's normal but they make us feel that we're refugees.

Moderator: In what way?

→ I speak Turkish well so I normally start a conversation with someone, then they ask me "where are you from?", I reply "from Syria", and I feel they want to end the conversation or something. of course, there are many nice friendly people.

→ Recently, some people started telling us "Turkish soldiers are fighting in Syria and you're resting here safely, go and protect your country, why are you here". This hurt us a lot.

Moderator: Was that something you heard from the media or did someone tell you that directly?

→ One Turkish person told me that directly.

Moderator: Let's talk about your choice to come to Istanbul. When you left Syria, did you consider or try to go elsewhere?

→ In the beginning, we wanted to go to Europe, Germany. We could get in Turkey legally because we are Palestinian/Syrians so we got smuggled in. On the road we lost lots of money because of robbery. My two siblings were able to go to Germany but we couldn't because of the lack of money and the borders were closed that time.

→ I wasn't able to enter legally because of my passport, I couldn't get a passport. My husband arrived to Turkey before us and I had to follow him. We did not have plans to stay here, but I was afraid of smuggling because it's dangerous and I have a child, so I couldn't leave Turkey.

Moderator: But you would like to go to Europe, right?

→ Yes, if I have the chance I would go to Europe.

Moderator: And, you cancelled your plan to go to Europe because you had bad experience with smuggling, right?

→ Yes, and also the smuggling road to Europe is more dangerous and costs a lot of money.

Moderator: What about the rest, did you come here legally?

→(Rest of the participants) we arrived here legally.

Moderator: Have you ever came to Turkey before the war?

→ Yes, in 2006 we went to Kurdistan and Turkey and things were normal back then. Then the economic situation got bad so decided to move to Turkey, Istanbul has a big chance of possibilities.

Moderator: xxx and xxx had plans to go to Europe, did anyone had similar plans when you were in Syria?

→ We had plans to go to Europe, but was afraid of the road because it's hard and dangerous and we have children so we draw back.

Moderator: When you were in Syria, how did you imagine the life here in Turkey? Do you feel like you had good information about your life here?

→ We were happy and excited to go to Turkey. We knew about it from TV series, I forgot that I was going to leave my family because I was so excited to see an amazing place. When we arrived we realized that it's much difficult than we thought.

→ We knew it was hard from the beginning because my husband's brother got here before and told us that life is difficult.

Moderator: So, you knew this stuff when you were in Syria?

→ Yes.

Moderator: And what did you think when you heard such things?

→ We believed him but we had to leave Syria.

Moderator: So, you told us that you were watching Turkish TV series, did you have any other information sources about the life in Turkey? May be a relative or a friend.

→(All participants) internet.

→ When I was in Iraq I looked up the rents and job opportunities. I searched which city has good rent prices.

Moderator: Which cities did you search for?

→ Ankara and Istanbul. In Ankara, there are no jobs.

Moderator: Any other sources?

→ Before the war, there were many Turkish TV series being broadcasted on Arabic channels and that encouraged us to visit the country for tourism.

Moderator: Did you have any friends or relatives who came to Turkey before you?

→ My aunt was her before I came here. we live at her home in the beginning.

Moderator: And what did she told you about Turkey when you were in Syria?

→ She told us that finding a job is very important.

Moderator: Do you have any relative, friend or neighbor who went to Europe instead of Turkey?

→ My siblings are in Germany.

→ My uncle is in Germany. My mother is law is in Sweden.

Moderator: Did your siblings come to Turkey first?

→ Yes, they got smuggled from Turkey.

→ My husband's relatives are in Germany and Netherlands.

Moderator: Do you still have contact with them?

→ Yes, with the social media.

Moderator: How is their life? What do they tell you about their life in Europe?

→ They are more happy and comfortable.

Moderator: Are they all happy or are there any differences between people living in these countries?

→ My husband's uncle stayed one year in Turkey, then he left to Europe. He says that he's so happy there.

→ The situation in Europe is more suitable for us, we can learn the language without worrying about the rents and life expanses because there is a salary.

→ For example, my mother in law is also happy in Sweden because she has a salary and she's living with her husband and daughter. She is 60 years old and she must study the language in school or they will cut off the salary.

Moderator: And is that a problem for her?

→ Yes sure, although she's sick, she has to go to school every day, and she is too old to understand.

Moderator: As far as I understood, it appears that your relatives and friends are happy in Europe, but are there any negative sides of being in Europe? Did they complain about anything?

→ My sister is suffering from taxes.

Moderator: Anyone else? Okay. Did you hear about anyone who came back or wants to come back from Europe to Turkey?

→ Yes. Some young people didn't like the life in Europe where you have a salary without a job and that's it. They didn't find what they expected. They couldn't stand being unemployed even if they have a salary.

Moderator: When you compare your life in Tukey to your relatives around Europe, how is it? What are the better or worse sides? Again, forget that we are Turkish.

→ For me as a widow with children, it would be better for me to live there with a salary. For families, I see that life here is better because of the education and the to raise our kids in Islamic culture.

Moderator: Is your family and your husband's family here?

→ Yes, my family is here. my mother in law is in Sweden, my father in law is in Egypt.

Moderator: Does anyone else want to add anything on this?

→ I worked here for two years while my siblings are getting education in Europe, and that made me feel bad because I want to study. Turkey and Europe are similar but in Europe they treat you as a real refugee, you have the right to study and get a job. However, here I can only work to afford my life.

Moderator: As far as I understood from you, the comparison is mainly about government assistance and language. But if your compare your life here in Turkey to your relative's life in

Europe in terms of society, how is the difference between societies? How is it to fit in these societies?

→ The Turkish society is close to us. In Europe it's totally different, especially their religious culture.

→ We heard a lot that it's hard to raise kids in Europe because there too much freedom compared to our society and that doesn't suit us. We heard of accidents where the government in European countries interfered in family issues because the parents misbehaved according to their law, that's not acceptable for us.

Moderator: Did you hear these stories from your relatives or is it a general observation?

→ My brother told me about it.

Moderator: In terms of treating residents in Turkey and Europe. She told us that the someone told her "Turkish soldiers are fighting in Syria and you are having a vacation here", did you hear such stories that happened in Europe?

→ In Europe, they respect the human being, they have humanity.

→ Turkish people think that we take salaries as a government assistance, and they mentioned that repeatedly. We have never received any money from the government. Many of Turkish people don't have any idea about what we've been through so that we left our country compelled.

Moderator: xxx, is your experience different from the others? May be because that you are Turkmen?.

→ Yes, I hear the same stories. But for example, after I told my neighbors about how we suffered, they understood our situation. But there are still others who don't know what's happening.

Moderator: Did you try to go to Europe since you came here? In a legal way or by smugglers?

→ (All participants) No. We are afraid of the danger on the way, we have kids.

Moderator: Do you have the economical means to go?

→ No, lack of money is also a barrier.

→ I lost my money on the road to Turkey.

Moderator: Since 2015, the number of people going to Europe by any means is increasing, do you have any idea why this increase happened?

→ The general reason is that the situation in our country got worse, everywhere was dangerous. Also, men were running away from military service. The government in Syria even started to take 40 years old men were to military service, so these men preferred to take their families and flee.

Moderator: The government started to do this in 2015?

→ Yes.

→ Before 2015, there were few safe places left, but in 2015 everywhere was completely unsafe and exposed to airstrikes.

→ We also heard a lot of rumors that borders will be closed and they will impose a visa to enter Turkey, so we thought that is was time to leave.

Moderator: Now I would like you to answer one by one. Let's start with xxx, how do you see your life in 2018?

→ If I got accepted to the university, my life would be much better.

→ I wish to get the Turkish citizenship.

→ I want to meet with my family in Germany.

→ I also want to reunite with my family in Saudi Arabia.

Moderator: Are you applying to get a visa to Saudi Arabia?

→ No, it's expensive.

→ I wish for the war to end in Syria and for my country to be safe.

Moderator: Do you think that it will be over in 2018?

→ No. I am planning to learn Turkish more. My kids will go to school and I want to be able to help them, they will go to kindergarten.

Moderator: How many of you have plans to leave Turkey?

Moderator: I see three of you wants to leave. Let's start with you, why do you want to go to Saudi Arabia?

→ To reunite with my family, I haven't seen them for 4 years.

Moderator: Why don't you want them to come to Turkey?

→ Because it's more comfortable there, it's an Arabic country.

Moderator: How is the life there?

→ It's normal.

Moderator: I mean how is education and health service for example?

→They work hard to afford life expanses. For the health service, it's free for us here, on the other hand it's very expensive in Saudi Arabia.

Moderator: And you, why do you want to go to Germany?

→ To reunite with my family. My father is in Syria.

Moderator: You plan to go but is this just an intention or have you made any plans on it?

→ Not yet. It's a reunification visa process, I am not sure that it will work at all.

Moderator: Would you go alone if you had the chance?

→ I would go. My mother has a reunification visa that my brother in Germany sent, so she's traveling within a month, then I will try to follow her although it's hard because I am over 18 and I can't get a reunification visa.

Moderator: And what's your plan xxx? Why do you want to get the Turkish citizenship?

→ Because we are not going back to Syria, and I don't want to go to another country. As I am Turkman, it's easy for me to get along with the people here, and I see a good future for my children here in Turkey, my little child is only eight years old and he speaks Arabic and Turkish as well.

Moderator: What are the factors that you take in consideration when you choose a country to go to? This question is for xxx.

→ The religious aspect is very important to me, here there are a lot of mosques and I like that.

Moderator: How did you know that they don't have mosques?

→ We heard from a relative in Germany. I also prefer to stay here because it's close to Syria, sometimes we go and visit our relatives when the borders are opened.

Moderator: And you ?

→ My husband's health condition is not good. He's better now and looking for a job but he can't work for long hours. He always came back exhausted from work.

Moderator: So, the reason why you want to go to Europe is the government assistance, right?

→ Yes, my husband's health condition doesn't allow him to work a lot, so it's better for us to be in Europe and have a government assistance.

Moderator: If you husband found a job that fits his health condition, would you stay in here?

→ For me I prefer to stay here to be close to my family in Syria. My husband is educated but he can't find a comfortable job because of the language barrier.

Moderator: What's his profession?

→ Accountant.

Moderator: Did you apply to go Europe?

→ We applied in many organizations like UNICEF and ASAM, we explained my husband's condition, but we were rejected. They told us "we will contact you", and they never did.

Moderator: Are you expecting something from them now?

→ Not at all.

Moderator: So, what do you think are your chances now to go to Europe?

→ I don't think there's a chance now. We didn't cancel the idea, but there are no means.

Moderator: Thank you xxx. And, why do you want to stay here xxx?

Xxx: because there is no other place to go to. I have a tourist residency permit now and in five years I will get a permanent residency permit. I want to continue my education.

Moderator: You said that you don't have any other place to go, but would you leave if you had the chance to go to another place?

→ No. I am used to the life here.

Moderator: And you, what about you?

→ I don't have any plans to leave. We have been here for three years, and I got used to the country here. It's hard to start again in a new country. For us, most of the countries refused us.

Moderator: Now I want to know more about the decision-making process, regarding your plans on staying or leaving Turkey. I will ask how you decided… I will do it in two parts, first with the ones who want to stay, and then with the ones who want to leave.

Moderator: So, xxx, xxx and xxxx (3 participants) want to stay. Have you ever at some point thought of living in another country?

→ When I left Syria, I wasn't thinking of anything but to be safe. As I arrived here I felt comfortable and I don't want to face any troubles in a new country any more.

Moderator: When you choose a country to live in, are there any important aspects other than culture and religion you take in consideration?

→ Having a job.

Moderator: Did you apply for resettlement? Have you heard about it?

→ No.

Moderator: How did you get information about legal things here in Turkey? For example, how to get a Kimlik?

→ We applied in an office, they got it for us.

→ My brother was here before me so he knows the procedures.

→ When I arrived I didn't know anything, then I heard from friends and relatives about the procedures.

Moderator: Now that you are here, do you search for the information of the legal structure of staying here? Do you consult a lawyer?

→ When I came it was an easy procedure for me, the Syrians here knew about it well. However now it's hard to take out Kimlik, my grandmother doesn't have one and they are refusing to give us.

Moderator: What's the problem?

→ They sometimes close the application, delay or just refuse.

Moderator: Do you think other countries have duties to refugees?

→ Yes, the Arab countries shouldn't have closed their borders.

Moderator: And what about European countries?

→ For me, I am not waiting for anything from them.

Moderator: Now let's move to you, you xxx, xxx and xxx want to leave. When you decide to move to a country, what are the things that you take in consideration?

→ My priority is to be with my family.

→ My siblings went to Germany because my uncle was there before.

Moderator: If you don't have family members in Germany, would you still go to Germany?

→ No. May be Canada.

Moderator: Why?

→ I feel that life is easy there, they speak English.

Moderator: In what means do you think life is easy in Canada?

→ My friends in Canada tell me about it, they say that treatment is much better and life is easy. I mean the language and finding a job are easy. Also, the procedures of getting Canadian citizenship is easier.

Moderator: How do you choose a country? Which aspects do you check? What do you ask your friends in other countries?

→ I ask them if they are comfortable and integrated. They tell us stories. my friend's neighbor in Germany has a factory, he hired my friend and helped him a lot.

Moderator: xxx, you applied to UNICEF to go to Europe, did you receive any assistance from them?

→ No. They just register your information and don't care. They help people who they know.

Moderator: Did you apply for any institution to assist you?

→(Most of the participants) no.

→Most of the institutions only take our information. We don't know how people are doing resettlement.

Moderator: Let's suppose that you are in Europe now, how do you imagine your life there?

→ For me, going to college is the most important thing, so I see myself learning the language and preparing to go to college.

Moderator: Do you have plans to work there?

→ Yes, after graduation.

→ I can't work because of my child. Maybe I would work, but I prefer to stay by my child.

Moderator: Do you think that the government in the country you consider helps migrants settle?

→ Yes, of course.

Moderator: What kind of assistance?

Maram: First, the rents and food. It should be organized process, they will send us to schools and then start a job.

→ In Saudi Arabia, there isn't any government assistance at all.

Moderator: Do you know what your legal situation will be in Europe when you get there?

→ First, we will get residency permit for a limited period of time, one to three years. After 5 years we can apply for the citizenship.

Moderator: Will you be able to travel to another country then?

→ Yes.

Moderator: Do you know about the legal procedures for that?

→ I don't have accurate information, but I heard that everything is organized and they government offers you help as you arrive. They give salary to rent a house and get furniture.

Moderator: How did you hear about this information?

→ From my sister in law in Sweden.

Moderator: This is all I want to ask. Thank you very much for joining us, I am very glad to talk to you.

→(All participants) Thank you.

"In focus groups, young men—those most likely to migrate to Europe— were especially knowledgeable about the complicated procedures for resettlement…

When our focus group participants were asked how they learned about legal procedures, one group laughed and said, "Google."

Focus Group Discussion
Profile: General Community – 5 participants
Age: 18-25
Sex: Male

Moderator: My name is xxx and I am twenty-seven years old, I studied Political Science and International Relations in university and I am working now in a research company. I meet different people from different cultures every day, and today I am with you. It's a tiring job but I am always enjoying it and I am happy to meet you all. Can you please talk about yourselves now? One by one please.

→ My name is xxx, I came to Turkey two years ago. I work as a graphic designer in Kuwaiti company. I live alone, my family is in Syria.

→ My name is xxx, I came to Turkey four years ago. I finished high school in Turkey and now I am studying computer science in university. I live with my parents.

→ My name is xxx, I am twenty-seven years old and I am studying theology. I live alone, my family lives in Adana.

Moderator: Were you living in Adana before you came to Istanbul?

→ Yes, I came to Istanbul from Adana to study.

→ My name is xxxx and I am twenty-four years old. I used to study mathematics back in Syria and also to teach at schools. I came to Turkey two years ago and now I am completing my study in Istanbul University.

Moderator: Did you apply to the university right after you arrived?

→ Yes, I applied when I arrived.

→ My name is xxx and I am twenty-three years old. I live here with my friends and my family is in Syria. I work in a company in marketing for a pajamas and lingerie, I speak Arabic and Turkish.

Moderator: Which company do you work at?

→ Deniz Grup.

Moderator: Thank you all for joining us. Let me start asking questions, can you tell how was your experience in Turkey since you came here?

→ It depends on the person, it's different when you are forced to be here and when you choose to be here, I chose to be here. I think the life here is good and better than other countries like Jordan or Lebanon.

Moderator: Better in which ways?

→ The facilitations here are good. For example, the legal documents were easily done when I first came here four years ago, now it might be more difficult. There was no visa required as well. Generally, they treat us in more sympathy here.

Moderator: So, do you agree with xxx or do you have different opinions?

→ As he said, it depends on the person himself, it's different according to the way you entered Turkey and your legal status. For me, I didn't face difficulties in Turkey as I am Turkman and I speak Turkish and English as well.

Moderator: What was the biggest challenge you had in Turkey? This question is for all of you.

→ The language is my biggest challenge. Secondly, it's so hard to find a job.

Moderator: Do you all have Kimliks (Identity cards provided to Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey)?

Most of participants: Yes.

→ I have a Kimlik but it causes me problems, I need to travel sometimes for work but I can't travel with a Kimlik.

→ I have a residency permit, I entered legally from airport and people advised me to get a residency permit instead of Kimlik in order to be able to travel, but in the same time I can't go to state hospitals for free because I don't have Kimlik.

→ I was in Izmir when I first came to Turkey, I take out a special residency book for foreigners at that time, but now this method is cancelled and they gave me Kimlik instead.

→ For me, I had no choice but to get a Kimlik.

Moderator: So, you were saying that your biggest challenges were official legal papers and the language, right? Other challenges you can think of?

→ The Kimlik we get is so bad, they use a web camera to put our picture and it's just a piece of paper, I feel that it has no quality. I went to open a bank account and the man in the bank didn't recognize that it's an ID, it's even so big that I can't put it in my pocket, these are my question marks. I wonder why is it like that… When I came to Turkey I did not want to become a refugee so I applied for legal residency permit I was supposed to have this Kimlik.

→ In my opinion, even getting the Kimlik, applying for that is too hard, and the treatment in Emniyet (police station) is not respectful, shout at us complete disrespect. Feeling lower level, I experienced it myself. I spent 10 days going back and forth. I had the old version I had to renew it, my university contacted me and said I need to renew it. I was about to beg them…

Moderator: So, I understand that all of you had problems with the Kimlik, application, having it, or not having it are problems…

→ Yes, there is only one center for Syrians in all the European side of Istanbul, and on the Asian side there is one.

→In Adana, there is online booking system. That system is also active here but it did not work.

Moderator: I understand the problems about the Kimlik and I want to move on… xxx told that he did not want to be a refugee when he came… What do you think about this, do you think of yourself as a refugee? This question is for all of you.

→ Even if we don't think of ourselves as refugees, everyone looks at us like this. Most of the Syrians fight, struggle and earn their own money, maybe only the people in camps are receiving help from the government here.

Moderator: Can you raise your hand if you not think of yourself as a refugee but think that the society considers themselves as refugee?

→(Four participants raise hands) us.

Moderator: So, 4 of you does not feel like he is a refugee but think that people considers them as refugees. So, do you consider yourself as a refugee? (Asking others)

→ Yes, because I was forced to leave.

Moderator: So, my question is that , what does the word Refugee means to you? Why you don't consider yourself as a refugee?

→ A refugee is someone who is asking for help, Turkey helped us in many things but I am under the regulation like any foreigner, I not receive special treatment. Eventually, I am working and paying for rent and life expenses just like any other citizen. Also, we are thankful that Turkey welcomed us and allowed us to stay in the country. For example, people in Europe who receive salaries and housing from the government can be considered as refugees.

Moderator: Which countries in Europe?

→Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, UK…

→ I don't consider myself as a refugee. A refugee is someone who is forced to leave a country. Who is living on the assistance of the government, why should I consider myself as a refugee if I am earning my own money? I am a normal citizen.

Moderator: As far as I understood, you think that refugee means somebody who gets help from the government. So, you don't consider yourself as a refugee because you don't receive assistance from the government, right? Are there any other reasons?

→ For me, I don't want to be called a refugee. If I want to be a refugee I would be gone to Europe. Now I had education and I am working now. I prefer to be called "guest", I think people in camps are definitely refugees.

→ I agree with what xxx said.

Moderator: What about you xxx?

→ I was in Tal-Abyad village I am a Kurd, and ISIS forced us to leave after they stole our properties. We used to have good life and everything, but I had to flee with my family, that's why I feel that I am a refugee. In the same time, I agree with my friends said as well regarding the definition of refugee.

Moderator: But do you think that being forced to go to another country for safety is enough to be considered as a refugee?

→ It depends, but yes mostly. I came here I seek refuge, no one treated me differently because my religion or ethnicity.

Moderator: And xxx you said that you do not consider yourself as refugee but the society thinks the opposite, why do you think like that?

→We do not receive any help from anyone, we live just like any other citizen.

Moderator: As far as I know, none of you receive a government assistance, right?

→(All participants): no.

→ Only some medical assistance.

Moderator: What about assistance from charities, NGO's?

→ I went to get medical assistance and they were nice to me in the hospital in the first time, then I needed a medicine but the pharmacy didn't give it to me for free because they don't connect with the government in these issues.

Moderator: Any others?

→I went one time and received medical assistance.

Moderator: And you?

→ I once went to rent a house and when the real-estate manager knew that I am Kurdish, he told me to/ go away.

Moderator: In which part of Istanbul?

→ In Fatih. Also, one day someone tried to break in our house and then he started yelling at us and told us to go back to Syria and ISIS. After couple of days we invited him to lunch and we became friends later.

Moderator: I want to ask you about your choice to come to Istanbul and maybe the choices of your friends and family who left Syria. Did you consider going to a place other than Turkey when you left Syria, like somewhere in Europe?

→ We didn't plan for it, we had relatives in Istanbul and we just came to them because we wanted a safe place. Generally, our intention was to come to Istanbul, city with higher opportunities.

→ My father and uncle went to Denmark, they stayed there for ten months and had the residency permit and travel document, I had a reunification visa to go to Denmark but my father came back to Turkey and decided to stay here.

Moderator: Why did he decide to come back?

→ They didn't like the social life there and the population is so little, the markets are so far. Even the city centers are socially empty. Also, it's not suitable for us as Muslims.

Moderator: Do you mean that being a Muslim is not easy in Denmark? What are their challenges as Muslims in Denmark?

→ Mostly it's about raising children, because it's too hard to raise children on our values in Europe. If we went there we will be obliged to learn Danish, here we already learning Turkish. When they left for Denmark, at that time because they had nothing, no jobs, no health insurance and no schools.

Moderator: And is it better now?

→ Yes, it's a little bit better.

Moderator: Is there anyone of you who wanted to go to Europe?

→ My parents wanted to go to Saudi Arabia, but they didn't issue us a visa. I have to follow my parents because they are old and I have to take care of them, but I want to stay in Turkey. Turkey was the only option… Currently, my parents visit our relatives in Saudi Arabia and come back but they prefer Turkey more even though language barrier.

Moderator: What made you decide to stay in Turkey instead of going to Europe for example?

→ I chose to stay in Turkey because they have the same religion, I had the chance to go to Europe but I didn't want to, in Europe they had totally different religions, cultures and traditions.

Moderator: What made you think that Europe wouldn't be good for you as a Muslim? What problems you think that you will have there?

→ Looking back to history, the infidels and crusaders didn't treat Muslims well, this makes me understand that Europe is not a choice for me.

→ If I had the chance to go safely to Europe without smuggling, I would have preferred Europe, it's better for education and as a human. It's hard to continue my education here, in Europe they would help me immediately. I disagree with xxx about the religious and cultural differences because we are open here and anywhere to other cultures, and we can be treated badly by any culture even you are in Mecca. I think we can be changemakers and instead of being effected we can be effective in European society.

Moderator: Do you have any friends and relatives in Europe that you are still in touch with them?

→(All participants): Yes.

Moderator: What do they tell you about Europe? How is life there?

→ It depends on the person, if someone wants to be successful and work, I think he can do it. However, it's time consuming somehow because you must learn the language. If I had the chance to go to a country where I can find a decent job, I would go because here I am being exploited in my job, I am taking less than the half of the normal salary of a Turkish man.

Moderator: Do you think in Europe this will be different?

→ Yes, my friends in Europe they get job salaries just like other citizens.

→ I have many friends in Europe in different countries, some of them were in Turkey first. They told me that social life is much better in Turkey, you can enjoy life. In Germany, the population is old and it's hard to have friends, even young people are not that social.

Moderator: Why is it hard to make friends in Germany? Any examples from your friends?

→ I think they are afraid of us, they are afraid getting close to us. The media plays a big role in this. In Netherlands example the official state TV talks about refugees in a nice way, people treat us better, the other day they talk about us badly on news, TV, then people start to behave badly to us…

Moderator: But these are these things that you heard from your friends right?

→ I have friends in Norway and Germany, most of them were in Turkey. They liked Turkey more but the life expenses forced them to leave. In Norway, my friends loved the social life there.

Moderator: What challenges do they face in these countries?

→ Social differences mainly, and cultural differences.

Moderator: I want to understand more, how do cultural differences create challenges? Can you give me some concrete examples?

→ My relative took refuge in the US; her husband is disabled. She expected life to be easier and that they will help her to treat her husband. However, she's struggling and working for long hours.

Moderator: Can you give me examples in terms of cultural differences?

→ I heard about a regulation in Europe that allows the employer to fire female employees with head scarf.

Moderator: From where did you hear about it?

→ TV.

→ In Europe, each country has its own law and traditions. In France, they are very strict against head scarf for example. Also, in European schools there are swimming classes and that's not suitable for our daughters because we don't wear swimming suits.

Moderator: I understand that you heard some of these stories on the media, but have you heard such situations or stories happened from your friends and relatives?

→ We hear the same stories mostly.

→ A friend of mine works in a factory here in Turkey, he got injured terribly and his legs almost got smashed, the employer paid for the treatment only at the beginning and then stopped supporting him. My friend got disappointed because of that and decided to go to Europe by the sea on a wheelchair, now he is in Germany.

Moderator: I hear all the problems you mentioned about Europe, and generally your experiences in Turkey were positive, so, did you expect to have any such problems here? Or do you think that if you go to Europe, it will be worse than Turkey?

→ It is not about the country it is about you as person. Istanbul is a touristic city and In Istanbul, there's so many Arab people from Egypt, Saudi, or Jordan, some of them might behave badly and the Turkish society usually blames the Syrians because they think all Arabs are Syrians.

→ Two months ago, in Ankara, Iraqi people had a fight with Turkish people about money issues, then the rumors spread as that Syrians are making fights and problems, so there were many protests against the Syrians because of that. Also, one Turkish channel said that Syrians are taking pictures of people in the beach, they take a bad example and spread news about it, it's not fair at all because we are not like that, I condemn any inappropriate action.

→ When I was in Emniyet once, the employee asked me if I have used a gun back in Syria and I replied "no", then second employee said "Turkish soldiers are fighting in Albab, what are you doing here?", I stayed silenced about it because they have no idea about the real situation.

→ I love the life here, I feel that I understand the Turkish society and can easily communicate, we have many similarities. I believe that adapting to the Turkish society is much easier than the European.

Moderator: But as far as I remember, you said that you would go to Europe if you had the chance, right?

→ Only if I had a better job opportunity.

Moderator: Did anyone of you try to go to Europe after you came to Turkey?

→(All participants) no.

Moderator: Why do you think your friends and relatives went to Europe?

→ Mostly because in Europe they pay salaries to support you until you learn the language. Also, they make workshops to teach people professions so that no one stays unemployed.

Moderator: Let us talk about future, what are your main aspirations for the near future for your life?

→ For me, I am looking forward to graduate from university, and then I want to continue with a master program.

Moderator: And after the master?

→ I think I will go on with a PhD and be an academician. My specialty is Islamic religion and I want wo do it in Turkey.

Moderator: Why do you want to do it in Turkey?

→ This specialty is available in the best way in Turkey.

Moderator: And xxx, what are your future plans?

→ I want to have my own business and a have a plan for that, but the situation here changes every now and then so nothing can be taken for certain.

Moderator: What can be changed?

→ One law, regarding Syrians, from the Turkish government can change a lot.

Moderator: Is your plan to have your own business here in Turkey?

→ Yes, but if the war ends, I would go back to Syria.

→ I don't think that we have many choices, we live day by day choosing only the chances that we see, I can't make a plan. For me, I wish to continue my education, my Turkish language is very good so I wish to learn Turkish literature or political science.

Moderator: Are you planning to go somewhere else or do you plan to stay in Turkey?

→ If there's a chance to study, I would go to any country. And compared to other Syrians my situation here is the best.

Moderator: In terms of what?

→My salary is good, my house is well, in my circle I can effect things…

Moderator: And you, what are your plans?

→ I want to study.

Moderator: Do you want to go to another country or stay in Turkey?

→ No, I am staying here.

Moderator: So only xxx would leave if he had a study opportunity, the other don't have any intention to go, am I right?

→ (All participants), yes.

→ I might go if I had a scholarship.

Moderator: Did you try to apply for any scholarships?

→ Not really, I found a scholarship to learn English for TOEFL test, this will help me to apply for scholarships.

→ Me too, I would travel to another country only to study. But I have two barriers, English language and I don't have a passport.

Moderator: Are you learning English?

→ I don't have time because I am studying Turkish language, it's more important to me now.

Moderator: So, some of you might leave Turkey if they had scholarship chances aboard, right?

→ Yes.

Moderator: And xxx, what are your future plans?

→ I want to graduate to get back to Syria if it's possible.

Moderator: Do you think that in the near future, you will be able to go to Syria?

→If the war ends, I will go back to Damascus.

Moderator: Do you plan to go to another country if the war doesn't end in Syria?

Participant 3: No, I would stay in Turkey. I have relatives in Urfa and I want to go and find them.

Moderator: This question is for you all. Will you go to Syria if the war ends tomorrow?

→(All participants), yes, of course.

Moderator: Do you believe that it will end soon?

→ I think after a year.

→ In ten years.

→ One or two years I think.

→ I lost my hope that the war will end.

→ I think that things will be better in the next three or five years.

Moderator: As far as I understood, none of you tried to go to Europe in legal or illegal ways, but have you ever applied for resettlement? Do you know what does resettlement means?

→ We know what resettlement means but we didn't apply.

How many of you know what resettlement is?

→(3 people raises hands)

Moderator: So 3 of you knows, so what is resettlement?

→ It is to ask another country to accept you as a citizen, it has the same conditions like if you go by smuggling, but it is a legal way and after a certain period you become a citizen.

→ It means that you register in the UNHCR, then they will study your application your file will be sent to one or more European countries and might offer you traveling to settle in a country and you can be accepted as citizen in one or more countries. According to the information in your file, you will be accepted or not.

Moderator: What is the chance of acceptance when you apply for resettlement?

→ It's very little.

Moderator: Why?

→For Syrians chances are very low, especially in US, they closed acceptance. They think Syrians are ISIS.

→ I think it's not little.

→ I think for Syrians it's very hard to be accepted because governments are suspecting us these days.

Moderator: Do you mean in Europe?

→ the chances to be accepted for resettlement in Europe are higher than United States.

→ it depends on the person, for example, Canada wants educated people who can speak English well and the number of family members as well.

Moderator: Why is the number of family members important?

→ Because there might be families with ten children and that's a big number.

Moderator: Do you think that you can pick the country of resettlement If you ask for resettlement?

→ No.

→ You did not tell us what you mean by resettlement?

Moderator: I am curious about your perspectives, your knowledge…

→If I do not know anything about an issue, I will not register for it.

Moderator: This is a valuable information for me too.

Moderator: Do you know about the procedures of resettlement, what do you do if you want to be resettled?

→ I read about resettlement conditions in the US once, I was in Syria back then, the conditions are very hard and they take few people out of millions of applications.

Moderator: Which sources do you look for when you want to understand about resettlement?

→ Google maybe (giggles).

Moderator: Any institutions?

→ I look to other people's experiments and embassies as well.

Moderator: Did any organization, institution or charity or a friend tell you about the legal context of resettlement? Do you know any institution that provide information about this? For example xxx told us about embassies, what else?

→ There is an organization for foreign students, it's called UDEF. I am volunteering with them, they provide information for foreign students, I think they might have information about resettlement.

→ As far as I know, these things are done by the UNHCR offices.

Moderator: Do you know what is asylum? What's the difference between asylum and resettlement? And for the ones who does not know resettlement, do you know what asylum is?

→ Some friends of mine took political asylum in Sweden. They had to prove that they participated in revolution activities, photos and videos.

Moderator: Do you know what's the legal difference between asylum and resettlement?

→ Resettlement is asking the country to get a place to live in and accept you as a permanent citizen. Asylum is asking or applying to live in a certain country for a certain period of time.

Moderator: Can choose the country of resettlement?

→ I don't know.

→ I think that you can't choose.

→ It depends on the needs of the countries, the UNHCR decides.

Moderator: That's all of my questions, thank you all.

→(All participants) thank you.

As one community leader put it, "Today Syrians are so active on social media, you can find information about immigration to any country in WhatsApp and Facebook groups."

This was echoed by another community leader, "Europe doesn't usually facilitate immigration procedures. However, the procedures are easy for Syrians now, which made people from Afghanistan for example claim to be Syrians."

In Depth Interview
Community Leader Nr. 3
Profile: Restaurant Owner
Age: 46
Sex: Male

Moderator: I will listen to your experiences and also your observations on the other Syrian community around you are very valuable for me. Your name and personal details will not be shared, it will be anonymous. If it's okay with you I can start with the first question.

→ No problem, we can start.

Moderator: I need to ask several questions about you. Can you tell me about yourself, what do you do? How old are you? What's your current occupation? You are a restaurant owner as far as I know…

→ Well, my name is xxxxx. I came to Istanbul in 2013. I could not come to Turkey directly because I am dissident from the Syrian government, so I had to come across to Jordan, Egypt and then Turkey. I am currently investing in a restaurant in Istanbul. Because of the war in Syria we had to flee out, our destination was Turkey, particularly Istanbul. After we arrived in, I looked for something to make money from instead of just spending. Many Syrians are living here so I searched for their needs and came up with the idea of opening a restaurant that serves Syrian food. By investing in this business, I also created jobs for other people. I mean, they had the experience in Syrian cuisine, on the other hand, I had money and administrative skills. This place is providing sustenance for 30 people. I think it has been a successful project so far, and I am looking forward to continue with it.

Moderator: Why did you choose Turkey?

→ Before I became a dissident from Syrian government, I used to work in the Ministry of Interior as an IT manager for data center. According to my situation, Turkey was the best choice to be safe and untracked.

Moderator: With whom do you live here? Where is your family? Wife, kids?

→ I live my wife and two kids.

Moderator: I want to understand your perceptions and experiences. I would like to understand your life after you came here. You told me you have been living in Turkey for four years, can you tell me about your experience living in Turkey so far? I mean how is your life in Turkey so far?

→ We had many difficulties. When we first arrived here it was very hard to find a rent because of the language barrier and the lack of information on how to find a house, also it took time to get used to the transportation system. Our whole life became different. I had nothing but my money then. At the beginning, I did not know how to choose where to live, I mean which part of Istanbul can be suitable for me. In the end, I chose to live in Faith as it is similar to our culture. The education of my kids was also a big concern to me. I did not expect the war in Syria to be this long. So, my family and I learnt the language and became opened to the culture of this country in order to settle. I always encourage my kids to study and make them aware of the importance of education in order to let them be self-dependent in the future.

Moderator: Currently, what is the most positive aspect of your life in Turkey?

→ I believe it's the stability of the decent life I have now and being able to afford my family's needs. I feel comfortable to settle here in Turkey because I see that Turkish people love their country and they are patriotic although they are from different races or have different political views, especially after what happened on 15th of July.

Moderator: What does government assistance mean to you?

→ Turkish government did not restrict Syrians from working. For me, the authorities were friendly to me and I easily established my company here in contrast to other countries like Gulf countries which do not allow you to establish any work without a native sponsor. In Turkey, I felt that when I have the financial ability to start a project, I would have the rights of a Turkish citizen. So, the government opened the market for us with ease, and this is the first level of assistance. The second level of assistance is the services provided. I mean health and education. I see that the Turkish government provided better services more than governments in Europe.

Moderator: What about the assistance of the civil society organizations, charities?

Respondent: Many organizations started working in Turkey after the war took place in Syria. For example, IHH is Turkish but they bring aids to Syrians as well. There is logistic support for these organizations in order to make delivering process easier. I feel satisfied with the role of civil society here.

Moderator: How well do you think the Turkish government does to assist Syrians? Or what's most positive part? Are you satisfied?

→ Yes, I am satisfied. The most important thing is that the government gave protection and safety.

Moderator: So, what are the shortcomings of government assistance?

→ Every country has its own good and bad people. However, the good friendly people I met are way much more. Some people ask Syrians "What are you doing here?" or somethings like "I need the rent now!". On the other hand, the majority was helpful and friendly to me. Lots of my neighbors here in Fatih offered me help whenever I faced a problem. So, I think the acceptance of Turkish society for Syrians is more comfortable compared to other societies.

Moderator: Is there any areas that need to be improved in the government assistance?

→ The presence of Syrians in Turkey has become a reality, so I advise the Turkish government to invest in Syrian qualifications and make the integration process easier by jobs and employment. We need serious efforts to organize this process.

Moderator: Have you heard about any governments that assist Syrians more than the Turkish government?

→ No, I believe it is offering the best assistance among all governments.

Moderator: Do you think of yourself as a refugee? What does the word refugee mean to you?

→ For me, no I don't feel as a refugee because I established my own company and I am treated like a Turkish citizen. However, I understand that there are lots of people in need for help from human organizations. Syrian people are always motivated to work and earn money from their own labor, they don't like being dependent only on other assistance.

Moderator: Who is a refugee for you?

→ A refugee is mainly someone looking for safety and a place to build his future when he can't achieve that in his home country. I met a lot of people who came back from Europe to Turkey. The reason of this is that they didn't have jobs there, getting into the market in Europe is much more difficult than here in Turkey.

Moderator: I want to hear your expectations about the future. What's your main inspiration in your life for the near future?

→ I applied for the Turkish citizenship and I am looking forward to get it soon. Getting my kids in schools and then universities and help them integrate in the society is a priority for me.

Moderator: Do you want to stay in Turkey or do you want to go? Why? Are there any other specific reasons? For example, anything related to health or employment?

→ I am planning to stay here and settle. As I mentioned, I have a stable life conditions here, job, health care, education and safety as well.

Moderator: Did you consider any country other than Turkey when you left Syria? Did you think about Europe for example?

→ Turkey was the only destination in my mind, but I had to cross to Jordan and Egypt first because I was tracked and couldn't go directly for security reasons.

Moderator: I know you are in contact with so many people here, you host people, you employ people. So thinking in general, do you think that Syrians are satisfied with their current life in Turkey?

→ The majority of them are satisfied and some are struggling.

Moderator: What are they satisfied with?

→ Mainly because they found jobs and can afford living costs. Also, the safety and stability of economic conditions here in Turkey. We are looking forward to see Turkey flourishing even more and more.

Moderator: Two years ago, in 2015 there was a huge increase in the number of Syriaans going to Europe as the numbers reached a spike, why do you think it happened?

→ People had high expectations about taking refuge in Europe, they thought that it's the land of opportunity and jobs. However, the reality was different and starting a life in Europe turns out to be much harder than Turkey.

Moderator: But what happened in 2015 specifically? For example, did the civil war got worse? Or did the European policy changed and became more welcoming? Or is it the smugglers who increased their activities?

→ Yeah sure, the war in Syria reached its peak in 2015. All of Syrian cities had huge battles, assassinations and kidnapping. Secondly, there was a point where people were running out of money at that time because of high life expenses, so they chose to flee out with their remaining money.

Moderator: Did the money become less because of the change in currency rates?

→ Yeah because of the currency and also the lack of jobs.

Moderator: You told us that people went to Europe with big expectations but they did not see what they dream of, why do you think it happened? What caused that gap? Where there rumors or bad information? Why they had unmet big expectations?

→ Since the beginning, people had this dream to immigrate to Europe. **Europe doesn't usually facilitate immigration procedures. However, the procedures are easy for Syrians now which made people from Afghanistan for example claim to be Syrians. So, people were encouraged about to the idea of European life.** Secondly, people promoted immigration to Europe with inaccurate information about refugee status and the rights of a refugee like residency and salary to make things look easy.

Moderator: Do you know anyone who came back from Europe?

→ Yes sure. I know someone who went to Germany and came back with his son, but his wife preferred to stay in Germany. He's now a fitness trainer in Istanbul. I can get you in touch with him.

Moderator: Thinking about the Syrians around you, what do you think is their main inspiration for near future?

→ The majority of people wants to settle. They want to have stabilized jobs and be part to Turkish society. I want to mention that also Syrians in Gulf country want to come to Turkey and buy real estates in here, maybe it's because Turkey is the safest place to invest money in.

Moderator: What is the main reason to stay?

→ Turkey is a growing country and still developing on many aspects. We also feel safe because the people here love their country and they will protect it despite the differences, what happened on 15th of July proved that. It meant that people have their own word in ruling their country. I mean the economic conditions are the main reason. The facilitates given by the government for foreigners are also valuable.

Moderator: When choosing a country to settle, which factors do Syrians take in consideration, economy, investment, what else do they look at?

→ Economic and cultural aspects are the most important.

Moderator: Who do you think the people that effect decisions of settling in a country? Who are those main decision affecters? It can be anybody, I mean who has the influence on these decisions?

→ I don't think it's people who affect these decisions. It's the conditions and pressure.

Moderator: But are there specific people like family members, friends or employers that have impact on this decision?

→ It might be but I guess it's rare situations.

Moderator: Do you think Syrians have enough knowledge about their choices or future countries for resettlement?

→ Yes. Today Syrians are so active on the social media, you can find information about immigration to any country in WhatsApp and Facebook groups.

Moderator: But again, do the Syrians have enough knowledge about the legal context for resettlement?

→ No, they do not have legal information. People always ask other people, they don't refer to reliable legal source. For example, we don't know the rules of family reunion until now, we feel that regulations are always changeable and unclear. When I used to work in Syria, I noticed that immigration rules are also in a status of continuous change.

Moderator: We are talking about getting information, maybe there are sources that people are not aware of, or maybe there lack of information sources. So, there's a problem of misinformation, right? So, do people usually ask support of others in this process? And from whom do they ask support?

→ They always ask each other, I mean family and friends. They don't ask official sources.

Moderator: Why is this?

→ Wherever Syrians go, they create their own community. Now we have a big community on the social media. For example, my wife is in more than fifteen WhatsApp groups about activities and anything you might need in Istanbul. Syrians transfer information very fast. We once created a WhatsApp group to monitor the line where we renew our residency permits, because it's crowded most of the time.

Moderator: So, there's a strong network of information. I understand that this process is going well, but what can be done to make it easier for the people?

→ Websites and newspapers are good solutions. For example, there is economical newspaper that might be useful for us, sometimes they promote special offers about water or electricity pills and we can't take advantage of it because we didn't hear of it, and this is because of language barrier. Recently, we tried to export a product but we had too many difficulties and dilation because the regulations are not clear to us.

Moderator: So official bureaucratic things should be in Arabic…

→ Yes, there should a website that targets people who can invest in order to make it easier for them. For example, there are many places to invest in other than Istanbul, but we don't have enough information about it.

Moderator: Do you think other countries have duties towards refugees?

→ Of course. Gulf countries. Instead of really helping Syrians, they used us to serve their own interests. They supported the revolution in Syria only for their own interest despite the desire of Syrians, and this action caused destruction of our country. We are not waiting anything from them now, they only follow their interests and the US interests. On the surface, it looks like they help us, but on the ground they worked against us.

Moderator: My last question, have you heard of an agreement between Europe and Turkey on the mobility of migrants?

→ Yes, I heard of course. It states that Turkey should monitor the boarders to control illegal migration, and EU will give financial support in return.

Moderator: Do you think this money is enough for Europe to fulfill its duties on this issue?

→ No, because the crisis is bigger than that. The money spent to help Syrians is only 1% of the spent to destroy Syria.

Moderator: Thank you so much, this is all I want to ask. Do you want to add anything?

→ The money spent on military stuff in way much more of the spent on aids. The Syrian crisis was good investment in war and they made a lot of money out of it, especially the Americans. The money they claim to give to us is a very small part of the money they made out of our crisis.

Moderator: Thank you so much, it was so enlightening. Thanks you so much.

"One respondent captured a common idea that the wave started because of the "statements of Angela Merkel, she welcomed the refugees. Also, governments made it easy at that time to go to Europe, they closed their eyes on the refugees' movement." "

In Depth Interview
Community Leader Nr. 5
Profile: Bookstore Community Coordinator
Age: 34
Sex: Male

Moderator: Thank you so much for coming xxx. I want to know you better, how old are you? What do you do? How is life?

→ I am 34 years old and I am a web programmer. I am responsible of coordination of the works in this place because xxxx (founder of the Bookstore/community center) is in Amsterdam. I have been married for one year and a half, I have no children yet.

Moderator: Do you speak Turkish?

→ A little.

Moderator: When did you come to Turkey?

→ In 2014.

Moderator: At that time, why did you choose Turkey?

→ Some people choose Turkey because they have no choice. I had many choices but I chose Turkey. I like the weather here, my other choices were either too hot or too cold, I mean Gulf countries or Sweden. The community here is very similar to the one in Syria, the big difference is the language. The advantages and disadvantages are similar to the Syrian community.

Moderator: What are the advantages and disadvantages?

→ It's a warm community here in contrast with European community. As for the disadvantages, maybe the people here might start a fight for no reason. (laughs)

Moderator: Is your family with you?

→ My mother and sister are still in Aleppo, my other sister is in Saudi Arabia, my brother is in Canada.

Moderator: You told me that you have here for the last 3 years, how is your experience in Turkey so far? How is life in Turkey?

→ For me it's good, it's hard to start a new life in a country. Maybe I am lucky because with my profession I can work anywhere, I just need a laptop and internet connection. Other people found it hard because they couldn't find a job.

Moderator: Are you doing your profession as a web programmer here as well?

→ I made the website here and some applications for projects, my main study was Business Administration.

Moderator: So, did you do Masters on Computer Programming?

→ No, I learned it by myself since I was a kid. I am one of those nerds.

Moderator: I understand that building your life here has been easier for you compared to the rest of the community, but can you also give me examples of hardships that you experienced?

→ it wasn't that easy at all. It was hard to find a house and job.

Moderator: What is the main reason behind these hardships?

→ The language is the main reason, also sometimes I'm being prejudiced against as a "Syrian" because of misbehave of another Syrian. For example, when I wanted to rent a house they told me "we don't rent out to Syrians". Sometimes they have the right to say that, because a

former Syrian family might not have paid the rent or broke their furniture, but a Turkish person might do that as well…

Moderator: Do you think the rents are high? Are the rent prices different when Syrians want to rent a house?

→ Yes, when I come to Mersin I had to pay one year in advance, for Turkish people you can pay monthly and I had to pay higher price. Also, in Istanbul I heard about such stories.

Moderator: What was the biggest challenge for you in Turkey?

→ To find a legal way to stay here. we have few choices, either the Kimlik (ID cards for Syrians Under Temporary Protection) or the tourist permit, and they are both temporary and this make us feel that we can't settle.

Moderator: And what's the most positive aspect?

→ As I said, the culture and the weather.

Moderator: What does government assistance means to you?

→ For an outside prospective, the government here is dealing with three million Syrian and that's a big number if the government will give money to them. In Europe, they have only tens of thousands.

Moderator: Can you tell me some types of government assistance?

→ Healthcare… The language barrier makes receiving health care difficult, the doctors get angry because they can't understand.

Moderator: I want to ask you about the assistance provided by non-governmental organizations, charities or foundations. Can you tell me something about that?

→ They are trying but I think they are wasting too much effort on bureaucratic things, they offer temporary help that doesn't make a difference.

Moderator: Why do you think it's temporary?

→ I can't see long term projects.

Moderator: Is it because of the project design of the NGOs or is it because of the current bureaucratic structure of the government?

→ Both. Most of the NGOs has bureaucracy inside their institution.

Moderator: If I ask about the Turkish government, how well the Turkish government is doing to assist the Syrian community from your prospective?

→ I can see that they are trying, but sometimes we don't know what's the law here, there are a lot of bureaucratic procedures. Again, there is three million Syrian here and that's not easy to handle. Every decision you make or cancel will be applied to three million.

Moderator: From your prospective, what is the most positive thing that has been done by the Turkish government?

→ I don't know.

Moderator: And what are the shortcomings or the lacking sides of the assistance of the Turkish government?

→ The legal issues and laws not being clear.

Moderator: What should be done in this issue? I mean what do you expect from the Turkish government to fix this issue? To make regulations clear and stop changing it after two months. Do they change it often?

→ Yes, if I have a ID number 98, I must change it to a ID number 99 after six months, we also have to change the Kimlik card and so.

Moderator: Do you need to reapply for the Kimlik card?

→ No, but to make an update on it.

Moderator: Does it have an expiration date?

→ We don't know, it's called temporary. They might announce that it's cancelled.

Moderator: Did that happen to anybody?

→ No. But they might have a surprising announcement. Once, they suddenly announced that people with Kimlik should have a travel permission if they want to go from one city to another, so I have to go to the foreigner's office and wait for three days to get the permission or pay for some men to get it fast.

Moderator: And what about if you want to go abroad? For example, Syria or Jordan.

→ You can't go because we should have a visa to get back and they are not giving visas for Syrians. I even know a Syrian immigrant girl in Canada, she applied for a visa and the Turkish government rejected her.

Moderator: So, then how did xxx, the owner of this bookstore manage to open a branch in Netherlands?

→ The owner has a schengen visa, he traveled to Netherlands and opened the bookstore.

Moderator: When was that?

→ He started eight months ago and the opening was last month.

Moderator: Are there any types of assistance that the Syrians should get here? Apart from the legal issues that you mentioned.

→ Education maybe, they are trying now after five years. At the beginning, they opened schools without supervising, but now they are forcing people to attend regular classes. They need a program to evaluate Syrian students before sending them to school instead of directly starting the education without a plan.

Moderator: You mean a different program where kids get orientation?

→ Not a different program, maybe a summer school to prepare students.

Moderator: And apart from education?

→ I can say everything but I am trying to be reasonable. The health care service is not very accessible because of the language barrier. If I had an accident I can't explain to doctors. 90% of Syrians here go to illegal Syrian clinics because they can understand the doctor there.

Moderator: What about job training? Do you think that it's important?

→ Yes, but that takes us back to the legal issue. I am not sure if I can work and take out a work permission, it's very hard.

Moderator: I want to ask some questions about the Syrians you interact with, do they think that getting government assistance or having a job is more important to them?

→ Sure, having a decent job here is the main issue of the Syrians here. For example, my friend Ammar has a certificate in networking but he works in clothing store.

Moderator: How do they find jobs? From which channels?

→ They go and ask the shops directly. Some employers look for Syrian employees because they get paid less without insurance.

Moderator: Is it common?

→ To be fair, 60-70% percent of Syrians get paid less. Only 10% of them has insurance.

Moderator: Do you think of yourself as a refugee?

→ Yeah sure.

Moderator: What's your definition of a refugee?

→ We feel that we are here in a temporary situation. We have no future here, we can't see what will happen.

Moderator: So, it's about temporarily being here?

→ Yeah.

Moderator: I would like to hear about your expectations of the future. What's your main inspiration for the near future?

→ To survive…

Moderator: I see, anything related family or work or anything?

→ In the near future, I don't know.

Moderator: Okay, what if I ask, how do you imagine your life in 2018?

→ I have no idea.

Moderator: Really?

→ Because I don't know how the situation will be, every six months the situation is changing, it's very hard to plan.

Moderator: How does it feel to be not able to make plans?

→ I like to have an adventurous life, but not that much... For the time being I decided to not to have a baby because of that.

Moderator: Do you plan to stay in Turkey or to go somewhere else?

→ If things are going well I will stay in Turkey, but if the war ends in Syria I will go back.

Moderator: Why do you plan to stay in Turkey? Which aspects of life make you want to stay?

→ I have been to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Sweden and Germany but I chose Turkey, I see Istanbul as the most beautiful city in the world.

Moderator: When you left Syria, have you considered going to another county other than Turkey?

→ I lived a couple of months in Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Egypt.

Moderator: This was after you left Syria, right?

→ Some of them was before because I was always traveling. For me, I was kicked out of Syria in 2010 before the war, I'm not allowed to visit Syria after that.

Moderator: I want to know in which countries did you live between 2010 and 2014?

→ Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Egypt.

Moderator: Can you tell me about the time you spent in these countries? What happened that you decided to come to on Turkey?

→ When I was in Syria before the war, I used to visit Turkey a lot, so I know the atmosphere there. In Saudi Arabia the weather is so hot and they are racists, the only way to stay there is a work permission and you have to renew it every year even if you stayed a hundred years. Saudi Arabia can only be a financial temporary option. In Europe, the weather and the social atmosphere wasn't helping. For example, in Sweden they are "very" nice, they act like I am someone that they should take care of but not someone from the community.

Moderator: Do you think they behave like that because of your country of origin?

→ No, they behave like that in general. But currently it's a curse to be Syrian, my nephews are Canadian but originally from Syria, they hide their origin because it might get them in trouble.

Moderator: How was Germany, how long did you stay there?

→ One and a half month, but I visited Germany for tourism before.

Moderator: Which cities do you like the most?

→ Frankfurt and Berlin.

Moderator: From where did you get information about these countries? About the life there, job conditions. Which sources did you use?

→ Community, internet or anything, I search a lot. I spent 600 liras on transportation when I arrived to Istanbul just to look around the city.

Moderator: That's very cool. Now, I would like to hear more on your observation on the Syrian community around you, do you think that the Syrian community is satisfied with their life here in Turkey?

→ Not that much, as I said it feels like a temporary condition.

Moderator: As you may know, in 2015, there was a huge spike in Syrians arriving in Europe. What do you think caused of this wave? What happened in 2015 that made more Syrians go to Europe?

→ Statements of Angela Merkel, she welcomed the refugees. Also, governments made it easy at that time to go to Europe, they closed their eyes on the refugees' movement. I remember that, at that time you can start your journey to Europe from Aksaray, there were a lot of smugglers there.

Moderator: Do you think that the civil war got worse in 2015? Do you think it contributed to that increase?

→ Yes somehow, before 2015 some areas were safe but the conflict got worse.

Moderator: Do you have friends living in Europe now? And in which countries?

→ Yes of course. They are mostly in Germany and Sweden.

Moderator: France?

→ No that much, because the refugee's law in France is not that supportive, you should apply and then try to survive for one year waiting.

Moderator: How do you think is the life of your friends in Europe compared to the Syrian community here? What differences do you see?

→ My friends in Europe tell me that they are bored, in Turkey we don't have time to get bored because we work for 12 hours a day. In Europe, the food and rent supported by the government, here we are always worried about the rent price and food expenses.

Moderator: Which ones are happier?

→ For me, the people in Turkey are happier.

Moderator: Why? You said they are working for long hours.

→ In a way or another they are living, in Europe the life is like early retirement. Maybe when I am fifty I will move to Europe.

Moderator: I see. Do you think that the people who went to Europe in 2015 had enough information about how their life would be? I mean did they understand what their situations would be in Europe?

→ No, most of them didn't know anything. I told some of my close friends "don't go, you won't be happy", but they didn't listen because some people made Europe look like heaven.

Moderator: Why? Why there is this information gap?

→ I don't know…

Moderator: Don't they search for information before?

→ It's hard to get clear information when you search. For example, I was searching with my friend about the best city with best food on Sweden, we found beautiful pictures of city, but when we went there we couldn't find people, I even stopped a man in the street and asked him "where is everyone?", the population in Sweden is so little.

Moderator: Do you think people act on rumors and misinformation? Do they rely on information from friends?

→ Yeah, mostly. There's this story of a Syrian girl, she lives in a refugee's camp in Belgium, she visits a Belgian old rich lady and takes selfie in the lady's house to pretend on the social media that this is her life in Belgium, and that made a lot of people admire the idea of going to Europe.

Moderator: So, people use social media?

→ Yeah, people here depend on the information from Facebook pages, some offices put this information. There isn't any legal source for information.

Moderator: Does the Ministry of migration or foreign affairs put information in their website?

→ Yes, but it's in Turkish and not that clear. We usually ask another people or offices here.

Moderator: Are there offices that provide information? Are they lawyers' office?

→ No, they are all brokers, they take money to fix issues.

Moderator: Isn't there an advocate that you can consulate to take an advice?

→ No. sometimes we know information more than lawyers because we have been through a lot of procedures.

Moderator: Did any of your friends come back from Europe?

→ I have a friend who's trying to come back but he couldn't yet.

Moderator: Why?

→ He needs a visa. I heard about people who want to get back here but not that much.

Moderator: What's the main reason for those who want to come back?

→ Mostly like my reasons.

Moderator: I see. Thinking about the other Syrians around you, what are their main aspirations for near future?

→ To have a decent life, a good job, a good life.

Moderator: Do you think they want to stay in Turkey or to go somewhere else?

→ Most of them would stay if they have good plan here. By good plan, I mean clear legal information and support to find a job in a legal way without taking advantage on them.

Moderator: What are their main reasons to stay in Turkey?

→ As I said, the Turkish community is similar to the Syrian.

Moderator: When Syrians are choosing a country to settle, which factors do they take into consideration? Other than culture that you have mentioned.

→ The simple answer is they choose a place to have a decent life as I said…

Moderator: Who are the people that affect the decisions of the Syrian community? Regarding the country of settlement, who influence them?

→ There isn't specific people, it's the rumors.

Moderator: You mean the rumor from family, friends?

→ Social media, really. If I made a rumor that Syrians here are getting the Turkish citizenship, people will start coming back from Europe.

Moderator: Do you think that Syrians have enough knowledge about their choices of countries for resettlement?

→ No, they are only depending on rumors. However, some people want to study so they look for real information. 70% are following rumors. I met people here who thinks that German language is easier than Turkish, they got this from rumors.

Moderator: Or maybe because they want to believe it?

→ Maybe, because it's Germany after all.

Moderator: What do you mean by that? How is the image of Germany?

→ Back in Syria, when we want to talk about quality we mention Germany, it's refers to high quality.

Moderator: Who do the people ask for legal information during the process of resettlement or asylum? For example, if they are here and they want to be resettled in Norway, from whom do they ask support?

→ Foundations, illegal offices, smugglers.

Moderator: Are there still smuggling activities?

→ Yes, always but less than before. It's not necessarily by the sea, it might be by the plane with a fake passport.

Moderator: Do the NGOs provide the needed support?

→ Some NGOs are good, others are just helping for their image.

Moderator: apart from fixing the information gap, what else can be done to ease the process of resettlement? I mean if a Syrian person wants to be resettled, how can we make it easier for him?

→ Provide information in their native language.

Moderator: Do you think that other countries have duties towards refugees?

→ Sure, all the world has this duty, it's about humanity.

Moderator: Do think we can talk about humanity in the current world?

→ For sure no.

Moderator: Why?

→ Really? (laughs). I am talking about the leaders not the people of course. Angela Merkel was welcoming the refugees but they were dying in the sea, why didn't she help them to come to Germany?

Moderator: How could it be done differently?

→ Maybe opening a refugee office here to select.

Moderator: What do you think of the agreement between Europe and Turkey about the movement of migrants?

→ You cannot ask a country to fulfill their duties to refugees, you can ask minimum. I think none of the parts is doing their part.

Moderator: How? I mean is it enough that the EU provide payments does this fulfill EU's duties to refugees?

→ It is not fair but... For me, I have a different prospective. I always say you should fix the main problem, not to fix the refugees' problem. It is political. It's clear that Europe doesn't want that big number of refugees, if you want to receive refugees, you should do it as it should be done not as you want.

Moderator: I think this is all I want to ask, is there anything you want to add?

→ No, thank you.

Moderator: Thank you.

"Another community leader explained: "It was all the facilities that Europe gave at that time, especially in Germany where they were welcoming refugees and people needed a safe place to go to, so they went." "

In Depth Interview
Community Leader Nr. 6
Profile: Choir Lead, Musician, Social Activist
Age: 33
Sex: Female

Moderator: Thank you so much for coming here today, can you please tell me about yourself? Who you are and what you do?

→ My name is xxx, I am thirty-three years old and I am a musician, I have been living here in Istanbul for four years. I had my own music center in Syria where I used to teach music. I have two bachelor degrees, in economics and another one in music. I used to work in a bank

before I left Syria. My music center was called "Harmony". I am still working as a musician here. Now I am working on three projects, I am the founder and conductor of "Istanbul mosaic Oriental choir", we have done great job with it so far, many Tv channels and magazines talked about it as it's also considered an integration project for Syrian refugees and other members from all over the world, we have Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, Kurdish, Persian and Greek songs, we sing for the peace. The second project is "Tomorrow is better", I am also the co-founder of this project, I have been working on it for two years for Syrian refugees' children, it started as social games and singing with the kids and now we're making workshops for them in Istanbul and in refugees' camp in Greece, then I made these workshops in Netherlands for Syrian and Dutch children as well, we have officially registered this project as an NGO in Netherlands because my partner in this project lives there, now we can also work officially in Turkey instead of just meeting in parks. The third project is "Ballet for Syria film", I am doing this project with my Turkish friends xxx, she's a film maker. She started to follow our activities with the choir and attend the concerts, then we became very close and she started making a film about me and my activities in Istanbul and even about my personal life. She filmed beautiful moments of the choir, I mean how we started and grew up, so the film is about all of that and about how music can cross borders and connect people. The screening of the film was in last February in Eindhoven, then we sent it to some film festivals and we were surprised from the awards we received for it and now we are invited to Hollywood film festival next year in March. We had an award of "Outstanding achievement" and "Freedom of speech". The film now is getting good publicity. These are my activities.

Moderator: Wow, perfect. With whom do you live here?

→ I live alone.

Moderator: Where is your family?

→ My father, mother, sister and brother are still is Damascus, I have a brother in Barcelona, he's a refugee there. My fiancé is in Netherlands, he's a refugee there as well.

Moderator: You have been in Istanbul for four years; can you tell me about your experience here? Positive and negative sides of it?.

→ As for positive sides, the life here is similar to our culture. Turkish people are nice to Syrians, with some exceptions of aggressive behavior, but in in general they treat Syrians well.

Moderator: You mean the treatment of the Turkish people, right?

→ Yes, I am talking about the Turkish people, not the government. There are somethings that Turkish people can't understand about Syrians, their expectations are not always right, but still I have many Turkish friends who are brothers and sisters to me, I feel like home in Turkey.

Moderator: Can you clarify what are the things that Turkish people can't understand about Syrians?

→ It's about lifestyle, it's hard for them to imagine how difficult it is for someone to leave his country and start a new life and adjust to new circumstances, sometimes they expect us to be exactly like them in lifestyle and traditions. I think it's not only about Syrians, Turkish people are not really opened to cultures around the world, a foreigner is still a foreigner. However, for me, I am really happy here.

Moderator: I see. what comes to your mind when I say "government assistance"?

→ I can't see any government assistance here if I compare it to Europe which I have visited many times. In Europe, they help refugees with the language courses which is the most important thing, they give insurance and healthcare, they give houses and schools, there are integration projects that help Syrians integrate fast in the society. On the other hand, in Turkey, even if they have a lot of money from the EU, we can't see anything on the ground. Some state hospitals are free for Syrians but still not covering everything, it's not enough. Syrians here are treated like any other foreigner, I have been in Istanbul for four years and I pay all my rents, bills and taxes and I even pay more than Turkish people because the rents are higher for Syrians, my neighbors are surprised from the rent I pay for the house owner and they tell me it's because you are a foreigner. This is what I meant by expectations, they think we are here for tourism, they don't understand that we are starting here from zero and building a new house. The government is not helping, my friends have Kimlik (Identity card for Syrians under temporary protection) and he gets no money from the government, he pays the rent and everything. I have a tourist residency permit, I don't have Kimlik.

Moderator: Why don't you have Kimlik?

→ I had the chance to ask for asylum in Turkey and get a Kimlik, but I wanted to go global with my projects and not be stuck in Turkey.

Moderator: And do you have Schengen visa?

→ Yes, I got it last year. For Kimlik holders it's impossible to get a visa to Europe and you are not allowed to travel outside Turkey if you are a refugee. I don't feel that I need Kimlik because even if I get it, I am not receiving support from the government.

Moderator: So, you are not receiving any kind of government assistance here, right?

→ Yes, I am not using at all.

Moderator: What about assistance of NGOs, what do you think about it?

Participant: I don't really believe in them all. They get a lot of funds but on the ground, we see nothing, they don't provide help for people in real need. They organize conferences in fancy hotels and spend too much money on things that have no influence on the ground. When they do field work, they target the wrong people. In my neighborhood, there are fifty families living in very bad situation with more than three hundred children, their children are always in the streets begging for money or working indecent jobs, I always ask them "why don't you go and register in NGOs?", they reply "we went many times and they only take our names and let us sign papers and that's it, we don't get any support from them". I mean where are these NGOs on the ground? Government can help and arrange Turkish language classes for Syrians, but they don't do it. The only benefit of the government is the hospitals as it's free, and schools are opened for Syrian students, but there's this language barrier, how can I send a Syrian student to Turkish school if he doesn't know the language? So, this is the gap we face here in Turkey.

Moderator: Can you give me example of governments which assist Syrians more than the Turkish government?

→ Netherlands, my fiancé is there. The government gives him financial support, house and language courses for him and his daughter, medical care as well, all for free. When they finish language course, the government offers them jobs or volunteering to integrate. They are really helping refugees to be part of the society and not just ignoring them.

Moderator: Related to that, do you consider yourself as a refugee?

→ I can say I am migrant.

Moderator: Why do you prefer this term instead of a refugee?

→ A refugee for me is someone who is obliged to come to a country and be protected and supported by this country. In my situation, I was forced to leave Syria but I had many countries to choose, I used to live in Lebanon when I had the chance to go to Spain with my brother, but I chose to come to Turkey.

Moderator: Why did you choose Turkey?

→ I used to visit Turkey for tourism before the war, I love the country, and the Turkish music is similar to us so I felt that I can do something here and be free. Now I am working on the plan I made for me in Turkey, Istanbul is a mix of east and west, it's colorful and fits my personality and vision. I am not planning to stay all my life in Turkey, I feel that it's a transition period or a station to build my life and get back my confident after I lost my music center and everything, so I am using my time here to build a base for my future.

Moderator: Lovely. How long will this period last? I mean what's your future plan?

→ Now we are getting the fruits of the film we made, it took us one and a half year to get it done and with zero budget, we funded the film by ourselves. my plan is that even if left Turkey, I will continue the work with the choir or find someone to manger it and stay in touch with me all the time. I already started to begin a new choir in Netherlands from Syrian refugees there, and anyone can join. I am planning to move to Netherlands but I haven't decided when yet. I usually get Schengen visa for cultural invitation, I went to Lyon and Geneva to perform a concert and also to Slovenia.

Moderator: So, we can say that you're planning to go to Netherlands at some point, but you don't have fixed plan, right?

→ Yes.

Moderator: Are you going to apply to asylum there?

→ No, I could have done it before but I don't want to, I still have roots here and work to be done. I was in the Dutch consulate today to ask for a long-term visa in order to stay there longer time and establish my NGO and make connections. I won't apply for asylum for sure.

Moderator: Are there any other options other than Netherlands?

→ No, because my fiancé is there. I don't really like it but it's nice country. He will get the citizenship next year and I guess we will not stay in Netherlands, maybe we will go to Greece or get back to Turkey. It's hard to live in Europe and adapt to their system and cold weather. In Europe, everything is well organized and you need official papers for everything and that

takes too much time to conduct, meanwhile, in Turkey you can do same things with a phone call.

Moderator: Do you gather information about countries when you choose to move to them? Like Greece for example.

→ Not really.

Moderator: I want to ask you about your observation on Syrian community around you, do you think that the Syrian community in Turkey are satisfied with their life here? Are they happy?

→ I can say that Turkey is better than other countries like Egypt, Jordan or Arabic countries, but it's still hard for them. Syrians are used in the market here, they take less salaries and work for longer hours and ever pay high rent price, and this makes the life here hard for them. Istanbul is a crowded city. However, Syrians are trying to be happy and find each other.

Moderator: What are the things that would make Syrians more comfortable and happy here?

→ it's all about what makes their life easier and about the government rules. For example, the government is not giving a visa for entering Turkey for any Syrian, it's impossible, my fiancé applied for Turkish visa to visit me and they rejected him three times. They are making our life difficult. This visa issue is a very big problem, people want to see their families and relatives, why are they cutting these relations? Secondly, the government should give Turkish language courses, Syrians don't have money to spend it on private courses.

Moderator: In 2015, there was a huge increase in numbers of Syrians going to Europe, what was the reason of the increase from your perspective?

Participant: It was all the facilities that Europe gave at that time, especially in Germany where they were welcoming refugees and people needed a safe place to go to, so they went. I was also thinking of going to Europe because most of my friends in Istanbul went there. Life there in easier, being in Turkey makes you stuck with no help.

Moderator: Do you think that illegal ways and smugglers caused that increase?

→ Of course, the roads of smuggling were easy, you can go to Izmir then to Greece. It was an agreement between governments but under the table, they made it easy and they could have stopped it if they want to, as you see now it's stopped because there's an agreement between Turkey and EU, Turkey is taking money from EU for refugees here.

Moderator: What do you think about this agreement? What do you feel about it?

→ It's for the Turkish government benefit, not for Syrians benefit. They take money in our name and they are not really helping on the ground. The level Syrians' life is not getting better.

Moderator: Do you think that this agreement is enough for the EU to fulfil its duties towards Syrians?

→ Yes, they have big number of refugee, and now they prefer to pay money for refugees in Turkey instead of receiving them, but technically refugees in Turkey are not getting any benefit of this money.

Moderator: As far as I understand from you, you think that Syrians in Europe have better life conditions, right?

→ Yes.

Moderator: Do you think that they are happier?

→ Generally, yes, because they don't think about details that we are concerned about here, we are always worried here to find jobs and pay rent, it's more stressful here. in Europe, the government supports refugees for the first couple of years until they learn the language and be able to find a job, but there are also difficulties there like the new culture. Generally, I can say that they are happier.

Moderator: Do hear somethings like religious discrimination or Islamophobic stories in Europe?

→ Generally, no. But there some situations of course. My fiancé changed his name from Muhammed to William to avoid problems and judgments.

Moderator: Do you think that people who went to Europe in 2015 had enough information about what their situation would be when they arrive to Europe?

→ No, it all about rumors and information gathered from friends and relatives. And, also their first expectation is to be safe and get support.

Moderator: What are other information sources that they use?

→ I think it's only from friends.

Moderator: Are there some bad rumors as well?

→ Yes, some of my friends tell "don't come to Germany, go to Sweden". It's all about what people say, people are always asking each other.

Moderator: Do you know anyone who came back from Europe?

→ Yes, many.

Moderator: What is their main reason?

→ Mostly religious reasons, they were not happy to mix boys and girls in schools for example. Some of them were upset because they had to work in jobs they don't like. They imagined a paradise there and it turns out to be something else.

Moderator: What are the future plans for the Syrians around you? I mean do they intend to stay in Turkey to go?

→ Some of them want to go back to Syria if the situation got better, some of them want to stay here because they already started and established a life here, some of them still have the dream to go to Europe. I think most the Syrians in Turkey will stay.

Moderator: Why?

→ It's difficult to reach Europe now and the situation in Syria doesn't seem to get any better soon.

Moderator: When Syrians choose a country to settle, what aspects do they look for?

→ They look for an easy language, the support of government, and also, we Syrians, love to be together in one community, so it's important to have other Syrians in the country we are going to. For example, I want to go to Netherlands because my fiancé is there.

Moderator: Do the Syrian community have information about the legal context of asylum and resettlement?

→ No, we ask each other.

Moderator: Is it enough?

→ Most of the time yes, and when we need further information we can ask lawyers. There is so many cases so we always ask each other because we have experience in these things now.

Moderator: Finally, what can be done to make the process of resettlement easier?

→ Travel permissions are big problem, all of refugees here can't leave the country, I mean the freedom of travel. Also, family reunification is important, I know many Syrian women here in turkey and their husbands are in Aleppo or Germany and they can't go to them. It's all about the freedom of traveling, we feel disconnected.

Moderator: Thank you so much.

→ Welcome.

"As one community leader explained, "Syrian people wouldn't go [to Europe] if they did not feel that they are accepted. They were saying that they are accepting us in the media, especially Arabic ones, and [journalists] interviewed people saying 'we found home and everything is ready,' and that was encouraging other people to go there." "

In Depth Interview
Community Leader Nr. 8
Profile: NGO Professional
Age: 26
Sex: Female

Moderator: Can you tell me about yourself xxx?

→I have been living in Turkey for almost 2 years, and got directly involved in the humanitarian field. I was working before in Jordan in an international organization. When I first came here I started working as a protection assistant for almost 9 months in a Turkish NGO, and then I got a new job in an international organization here called AAR JAPAN and this is who I am. I am 26 years old. Regardless to my work I am volunteering in a community center called Addar and I am teaching French classes for children there. I left Syria almost at 2012 and went back many times to finish my classes because I did not graduate when I was in Syria 2012. So I went to Jordan and then KSA and then back Jordan and Syria. In the 3rd month of 2014 I left Syria because I graduated. I left to Jordan because I was working there, then I came here to Turkey.

In Jordan they have this regulation that the Syrian cannot work anymore in international organizations, for the accountability and stuff reasons, they said. And that was the only thing that I know how to do, so I was thinking to try my chance here in Turkey. I did not like teaching, and I do not want to work as a teacher, though I studied French literature. And I was working and everything was ok in Jordan. I worked there for almost 2 years in the organization and beside studied Psychosocial Case Management that time. And when they released that regulation I was like..!! should I stay there?!! And then I came to Turkey.

Moderator: Why did you chose Turkey but not any other countries?

→Syrians do not have that much choices. We have Lebanon, Jordan, Sudan and Turkey. They were saying it will be difficult to get to Turkey and you will have to get a visa to come to Turkey. So I said I will come to Turkey and have the residence permit and I can just go back to Jordan or Lebanon if I couldn't, if I didn't like it. I cannot go back to Syria due to my political opinion.

When I found a job here I felt comfortable. I did not apply for Temporary Protection ID because I came from a third safe country so I cannot apply for Temporary Protection. So I had my residence permit and then my work permit. If I came directly from Syria I would have the right to have a Temporary Protection ID. But since I came from another country I don't have the right to apply for it. They canceled this regulation at the beginning of this year. It is good and much comfortable for me that I have a residence permit because I know that getting a TP ID will not allow me to travel out and come back here.

Moderator: How is life in Turkey? For the last 2 years, considering everything?

→ I would say that I really love Istanbul. I will want to live here even if I got a job opportunity with more salary outside Istanbul. I really like this city. It is really catchy, spot of diversity, it is something really different. But it is also struggling. I call it the city of struggle because you keep running for transportation. Especially that Damascus was really small city and then when I moved to Jordan it was also a small city. And then when I came here I was shocked. The transportation like the Metrobus was really huge. And you should fight for everything here, it is not that easy process, the bureaucracy here is really killing, each step for any document takes very long time, and this is the most horrible thing in Turkey.

Moderator: Any other challenges?

→ Finding a job wasn't that easy and I expected it to be easier. I came from 2 years of experience in the humanitarian field and I can speak English and French fluently besides Arabic, and I thought that Arabic-English speakers here they need them for humanitarian field, but it was really suffering. I was for 6 months just looking and applying, I did not even get any feedback. In Jordan for example or in any international organization, when you are applying, you are getting: "ok, we regret to inform you that you are not selected" but here it is like no reply! And I was really shocked, because I thought the problem was in my email or so. It was really hard the 1st 6 months in Turkey was a really difficult time for me. Then after getting the first job in Turkey, it will be much easier, you know I applied to IMC, IRC, AAR JAPAN. And they were like ok, she has experience in Jordan beside Turkey, so it was really easy to get very fast feedback from them. The challenges like I told you, as I said the paperwork is really horrible because there is a problem with the system. Even I had a residence permit, I got this problem when my residence permit doesn't show on the system, and I was calling

them about this issue for 2 months and they were telling to get another appointment, and when I came again they found that the residence permit doesn't show on the system because the work permit still valid. I mean they could tell me this by phone. I was stressed out because if my residence permit has been cancelled that means that they are going to deport me to another country. I am not talking just for residence permit; even getting Temporary protection ID for Syrian people takes such a long time about 9 months to get registered, and sometimes people are sick or they have children want to register in schools and you cannot do anything without registering in the system.

Moderator: For the positive aspects of being in Turkey, what do you say?

→ I can say that there are too many nice people. I feel that people here are friendly, even if they can't speak English but they are trying to help, they are really warm. They even sometimes call someone knows English to help me if I needed something and I couldn't understand them. I felt that they are really friendly. I also cannot ignore the fact that they received the most number of Syrians among all Arabic countries. For Turkey even it is not an Arabic country but they opened their doors for all these Syrian people. And, after registering yourself into the system, everything becomes easier. You can go to school and hospital. This is not the same in Lebanon. And in Jordan they have different system because the government doesn't register anyone; basically, the UNHCR does register everyone so it is taking over everything there. But here even you can register for social support and you can access to many things. Ok there is still the language barrier but whenever you got a translator with you so you can register everywhere.

Moderator: What does government assistance mean to you?

→ I would talk about the Syrian Refugees. In most of our cases Syrians are struggling to get Temporary Protection ID, before this you are no one, you're nothing, you don't have any right. And it really takes long time and it is incredible. 2 years ago, it was really easy, people were going to the police station and getting registered and this is the end of suffering. For the government assistance, as I am working in an NGO, well they are assisting people to access to hospitals. I know that Syrian people keep complaining about hospitals that they are not useful and they went many times. At the same time it takes us 1 month to get an appointment. But when I telling this for my Turkish friends they say they are suffering the same. So it is not about discrimination here. Yes there are some incidents about discrimination for Syrians, but for example when my Turkish friend calls to book an appointment they suffer the same and they give them after 1 month or 15 days for the appointment. We discovered the Social Services Center for people with disability, so we can register them. It is really new and we are really happy that we discovered it. Ok, they need lots of documents again. They need the disability report, but whenever you provide this report they will support this person financially monthly. But it is really difficult to get this report and it takes 6 months. They refer this patient from hospital to hospital and we keep providing translation and transportation because the person is disabled. So he can't use normal transportations. We succeed in many cases to get this report. And then when we go to this Social Services Center it will be fine, they accept them and start to support them financially.

Moderator: What do you think about the assistance from non-governmental sector since you work there?

→Let me say that ESSN Project or Kizilay Kart (Turkish Red Crescent Card) they call it. It is really important and huge one and I don't know why it takes really long time to decide to release this project! Because it was in Jordan since 2013. Anyway, that was between Kizilay and WFP and it is a very important one. But still again, it is an international NGO and Turkish NGO who are working on this project, so why are you accepting just the people registered as temporary protection ID? What about the people that don't have? What should they do? They have no right even to take help from NGOs. As NGOs we are working in both development response and emergency response. For the emergency response, we are providing food basket or whatever, but it is not the best solution for our case. I mean for how long we are going to keep providing these? It is ok we provide the new comers with translations, food basket and we cover their rent for 1 month or whatever, and then? I mean this guy needs to get registered. For development response we are working on providing translation, facilitating hospitals or schools registration, because registering in school is not easy and even if you are registered sometimes the school manager would say: "we don't have place"… so I mean we need to saying with Turkish citizens and talk to them and say ok they have the right and there is regulation and you cannot say just we don't have place… I guess most of the organizations that working in protection field are working on this and emergency response. They are focusing more on trying to let people get the benefit from the services that are already exist. But we still cannot deny that we really still need this emergency response somehow.

Moderator: Have you heard about other governments that are doing more to assist Syrians?

→To be honest if you want to take a look for Arabic countries for example?, No. In Jordan for example everything is accessible but not under the Jordanian government, rather under UNHCR. But for example if you are looking for Germany, Norway, Switzerland, it is much more comfortable that is why Syrians want to go there because they say: "we are going to have our houses, we can go to schools, they are going to give us language classes which is not really easy to get here" so that is why people tend to go there. It is just much comfortable especially accommodation stuff because Istanbul is an expensive city and they keep complaining. "ok, if we left to Germany or any EU country we are going to have at least home or house to live" so this is the concern of people. But compared to Arabic countries I don't think that they are doing much more. In Lebanon the situation is really bad. In Jordan I guess the situation is good because there is no language barrier and the government doesn't do anything and UNHCR is leading everything.

Moderator: Do you consider yourself as a refugee?

→ No…I mean… I cannot consider.. I mean it is just something… yea I can consider myself as an asylum seeker because I went out of my country because of my political opinion. I got arrested there and it was like really problematic. That's why I left Syria, but not as a refugee. In Jordan I got my student residency and here in Turkey I got my residence permit and I have my working permit. I cannot say I am refugee because when you are saying refugee it means that someone got displacement and then he needs some support or whatever. But I am not, as I am not getting any support literally so I cannot say I can consider myself. But I mean sometimes it is not our choice. Sometimes I feel that whatever I try even if I have my work and good salary, I am refugee at the end and cannot change it. I went out of my country without want. Ok as a legal status I am not refugee, but sometimes you cannot ignore it because I left my country like the others because I cannot stay there.

Moderator: What is your aspiration for near future? I heard you are going to USA for Master.

→ Actually this discussion was very long because everyone was saying: "so you're leaving..". I am not leaving, I am just going to study and come back here to Turkey. I really want to keep working with refugees. It doesn't matter here or whatever because in Jordan I was not only working with Syrian refugees, I was also working with Iraqi. And here as well with Iraqis and Afghanis. So the thing is that I want to complete my study in USA and I will take this knowledge to implement it near eastern area. I know that this is more conflictual area. But what can I do in the US?! There is not much to do there especially I am an Arabic speaker, so they do not need me there. I really want to do something related with the women, because the women already are vulnerable and then as a refugee woman it is really crazy. For example too many cases they cannot get divorced or anything because they are already women and don't have the right to do so, and also refugees that mean documents paying a lot of money that they don't have. So I wish that I can work in a project related with women.

Moderator: So you told me you plan to go back to Turkey or some other countries in the region so you can channel your resources. Do you consider somewhere in Europe?

→The thing is that I guess in Europe there are too many qualified people who work in this field already. I wish I could get more experienced working with refugees in Germany because it has really a huge number. But it even doesn't matter for me if it was Africa. It should not be only Syrian refugees. I really want to take an international vision about what is going on, because Syrian people are not the only refugees in the world so I wish that I could get experience with other nationalities.

Moderator: When you first left Syria for Jordan, have you ever considered going to some other countries in Europe?

→ Of course I studied French literature and I wanted to work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and I like to be in diplomatic missions in France or in other French speaking countries, but the thing is that everything turned around and destroyed very fast and then I was thinking like, then what? And it was really difficult to get to any country so I have decided that I cannot be diplomatic anywhere, so just changed the profession. Actually when I started I didn't think that I will really get involved in humanitarian field. I was in Syria and there were many people who left Darra or Homs or whatever and they started to live in the gardens so me and my friends were collecting some blankets or whatever and give it to these people, and then I've said ok this is something I really want to do and I realized that I want to keep working in humanitarian field.

Moderator: Do you think that the Syrian community in Istanbul are generally satisfied with their life so far?

→That is really a difficult question. I will say it depends. Because too many people who can easily go to Europe, rejected the idea and said "we don't want to go to Europe; it is not something similar to our culture". And I know too many cases when they get a call from UNHCR to be resettled in Canada and they reject saying "No we can't handle Canada, it is very far for our culture, religion.." and many of them were saying: "ok, we are staying here even if the language is difficult but at least there is something similar to our culture, we can find mosque, church and whatever you want …". But on the other hand, since I am working with vulnerable people, so they keep complaining about everything being expensive and it is

difficult to find a job. And on the other hand I can say that there are too many Syrians that came here and opened their own business and they are really happy, they cannot say "we want to change the country". People came without anything from Syria and they didn't live in camps, they came to here directly from Ankara or whatever. It was really difficult for them to adjust because you need to have money before coming to here to establish normal life. Otherwise the vulnerable people, No. they are not happy, I can say it.

Moderator: So there are 2 parts of the story and the main differentiation factor is the economic condition?

→Because on the other hand, they are somehow adjusting because it is a similar culture. For example if you are conservative or religious you can just live in religious areas. And if you are open minded you can go Cihangir or whatever. So among all the Syrians I can say this is really common point. But also the economic issue for the vulnerable people is really hard.

Moderator: In 2015 there was that spike of the Syrian community going to Europe. From your prospective what was the main reason of this?

→ There are too many different points in this story. **First for example Syrian people wouldn't go there if they did not feel that they are accepted. They were saying that they are accepting us in media especially Arabic ones which makes interview with people while they are saying "we found home and everything is ready" and that was encouraging other people to go there.** Secondly, I can say that the economic situation for Syrian people when they left did not change for 2 years. So they said let establish a new life in another city. The thing with Temporary Protection, the word itself is really making people confused and stressed out. We are not staying here; we are just under temporary protection so we cannot establish our life here. So people were saying "ok. Let us go there; at least we won't be under temporary protection. We will settle there". And it was really easy since there were no borders control and it was easy, pay 700 dollars and you are there without paying more than the trip cost.

Moderator: What about the possible effect of the EU policy. Do you thing that there was change in the EU policy back then? Were they more welcoming?

→ Yes, I've said. It was the EU media itself. Like Merkel many times gave nice speech and that was very encouraging for Syrian people. So it is the media. People were not going from Turkey only; people were coming from Jordan to Turkey to go to Europe as well.

Moderator: Do you think that the role of illegal transfer and smugglers has increased this?

→Let me say, these smugglers whenever they find a chance they will take it. And it was easy to go and people want to do that so they took that chance. They don't care about what they are doing, but just care about their pocket. I can say that I heard a lot of stories how much it was dangerous and they did not expect it to be so. And many people said if they knew it will be dangerous they won't do it. I have a close friend, they told her you will be fine and things will be ok. You are just going to be with 6 people, and then she was in a boat with 50 people. And when she said that she changed her mind and does not want to go like this, they told her she cannot change her mind and she is getting in. In the social media people was saying that it is so easy and safe. But people who experienced it they know it is not that safe. Even if you spent more or less money it doesn't matter because it is difficult for anyone. My friend paid 700 $ but they were telling her if she paid 1500$ she will be safe. And when she saw what

happened next she was shocked because they were lying. And when she arrived there she told me that she was really traumatized because she was for 2 hours in the water and they told her that it is just going to be 20 minutes. But again also many people they really like there because they feel that education and opportunities there are much better than here. Especially like I have said that here you are under temporary protection and there are temporary education centers that are teaching in Arabic. But then you need to study in Turkish! They shut down the temporary education centers and they said like you should study in Turkish for the integration. The situation here is really blurry. People couldn't understand what will happen to us. We didn't got resettlement for other country neither settled here. Even though recently some people are getting the citizenship but it is very few. Anyway, the Temporary protection status of Syrian refugees here makes them more stressed out about the future and it makes them all the time want to change the country even to go back to Syria and never return.

Moderator: You told me about your friend's life in Europe. In some aspects you told me it is better. Can you summarize the things that are good there and the things that are good here from your perspective?

→Let me say that there is too many people that went to Germany and they went back at the same way they left. They did not like it. They did not like the life in Europe. Before March 2016, the people who arrived there are kind of secure and happy because it was easy to get your residence permit. For example one of my friends he has been living in Luxemburg for 2 years and till now no residence or anything. Of course you could still have many rights like to enroll in language schools and get your home free of charge and a health insurance. But let me say about the better sides of living here, it is really important here because people there feel that it is really far from our culture. My friend told me that his father got crazy because he couldn't find any mosque. They put them in a small village, and they are selecting the city that they will live in. Here you come and live where ever you want unless you are getting your temporary protection ID so you cannot just like move easily. But you are still choosing somehow at the beginning. You are choosing Ankara or any other city and you apply and stay there. In Europe it is not like that, they will choose the place where you are going to stay in. I mentioned before that Istanbul is quite dangerous city because it is a big city and it is normal for all big cities to be dangerous, but I felt that people are really warm; I am not talking about the government side but about normal people around. For example, during visiting cases, when we ask: "when did you get your furniture?" They say "my neighbor gave it to me". You cannot find this soul in Europe. People here like to support each other, even when there is an activity when Syrian Children meet Turkish Children and do activities together to integrate Syrians with Turkish, we call Turkish families and their response were shocking for us, they always say that they are coming and bringing their children with them.

Moderator: Do you think that Syrian community here have knowledge about the legal context of staying here?

→Many people they don't know why they should register to get temporary protection ID. They don't know about their rights or whatever. But then they keep asking us "Then what?... are we going to stay as temporary protection? Are they going to turn it to international protection? Should we stay like this?". I had a case of a mother, she was telling me "My son was studying for three years in Turkey till now. I came when he was 5 and now he is 8. And he can't even write in Arabic. He can speak fluent Turkish only! So what if the war finished? Are they sending us back to Syria? What should I do that time?" She was asking us if she can

register him for Arabic classes. Especially that Syrians cannot understand what is going on. For example you go to register and your ID starts with 98. And suddenly they request from everyone to go and change their ID to 99 and people were asking us why this is?! Then suddenly they changed the shape of the Kimlik. They were asking people to go and correct their information and get new Kimlik. And people were like they have just got their Kimliks! This issue might not be important for many, but for Syrians they get stressed out. What is going on? What is all this?

Moderator: Did any of you friends come back to Europe?

→Yes. One of our cases, I met her son, we were visiting them for assessment. Her son said "I came back before 2 days from Europe. I couldn't live there. It is totally different and I have used to be here with my friends and I liked my job though it was not a high salary and I liked my boss. He was very supportive when we first came here. But here in Germany I used to stay for 3 months without doing anything, we were just staying at home all the time, getting more depressed. So I couldn't handle and I came back here"

Moderator: What is the general tendency of the Syrians here? Do they want to go or to stay here?

→It is really difficult because I cannot generalize all the time but I feel that most of the people are trying to find a way going back to Syria or out of Turkey. But I noticed many people that they just settled down here and they are good. They might go to Syria for a visit when things are better there, but they don't have any intention to go to Europe. But I would say that the most Syrian people that are still living here and don't want to move to Europe because they have a dream to go back to Syria. You can find too many people that ask "why didn't you go to Europe?" and they Answer: "Because I am planning to go back to Syria…"

Moderator: The ones who want to go. What do they look for in a country to go there?

→Regardless about the economic support which is really important for many of them. Also many people say that they are going to Europe for the future of their children because they will be German citizens and their passports will allow them to go everywhere in the world, they can study in German schools. So many people went because they want to secure a better future for their children.

Moderator: Who are those that influence Syrians' decision to settle somewhere?

→It is quite complicated but I can say that media is playing a big role. But at the same time it is complicated because civil society leaderships have real effect on them. For example a lot of Muslim people they got many advices not to go to Europe because they will lose their religion. But they went! Let me say maybe that the media and the financial situation really affect this situation generally.

Moderator: Any impact from family members or friends who are already there? Or rumors?

→Sure the family is really important because whenever you have a family member in Germany that means the whole family wants to go there. Because they are saying ok we are fine, we are sitting home and going to German classes. The reunification is another part in this. If a family member is in there that means that his family is waiting for resettlement. IOM are doing a project with the German consulate. They are making huge efforts to reunification families in

Germany. Friends have their impact as well when they hear about their friends are feeling ok there and getting in schools and university so they feel they want to live like this as well.

Moderator: Do you think that the Syrian community in general have enough knowledge about the future choices regarding those countries for settlement?

→No. definitely I can say no. Because it just they were thinking about financial stuff. That they are financially safe there. It is really sad to say so, but it is really this way. I mean, ok, we can't find job here in Turkey or Jordan or Lebanon, so let's go there.. at least we are going to be secured financially. It is sad to say but they did not know about the language barrier it will be very difficult. There are Syrian people there in Germany since 2 years and they couldn't even learn German, so how are you going to integrate later? What are you going to do? Are you planning to stay whole your life in your house doing nothing? So I guess they didn't really understand their choices and they were just want to secure themselves financially.

Moderator: What are the contributing factors to this information gap? What are the reasons behind this gap?

→I cannot say the reasons because usually when people want to travel they just make a research about the country or the city that they want to go to. But as it is already a crises and everyone is traumatized and everything is in mess like in an emergency situation that people cannot think, so they were like any other choice can give any hope, they will take it whatever it is. So I guess this is the main reason. Especially Syrians, they didn't like to travel that much. I know that Syrian people don't want to leave their country. But when they were in this situation, out of the country, they will take any hope opportunity.

Moderator: About the legal information; what are the specific reasons people don't know about the legal context of going or staying?

→I would say for the case of staying in Turkey, I guess the language barrier is one of the most important things because people don't know where they should go or what they should do or if they have any rights or not. And this is the NGOs role came to make raising awareness sessions about that. For going case, it is just like they follow their common sense: "ok there is people abroad, and they are giving them houses and whatever, so let us go there". But if you ask any of them which kind of status you are going to get there? They have no idea. Of course you won't have any idea because you are not there yet. But when you are going there you start to understand the situation and that it is not pink life. I think it is because they were focusing on the economic issue and when they arrived there they were shocked about the reality. For here I guess it is really the language barrier because people have many rights here and they don't know about it. Once we were trying to register children is school, one of the mother said that she don't want to send her son because she don't want to pay for the school. But she did not know that it is for free!

Moderator: Do they know the risks of deportation or do they know the concept of resettlement technically?

→No, I don't really think that they understand the concept of what is legal. But right know people with temporary protection ID they understand their situation under temporary protection, they don't know a lot about deportation because they have the idea that they are refugees and nobody can deport them to their country. Sometimes we try to help some referral cases for IOM for reunification purposes and when we ask people they say: "My son is living

there…". We ask about his status there and they say "well he got 1 year residence permit .." But what is his status??! Which kind of status he has?? …and then they tell us " 1 year residence means that he is permanent refugee or whatever ".. "2 years it means that he got his residence …..". So I guess that No they cannot understand easily the legal situation not in Turkey and not in even in Europe.

Moderator: Is it because of the language barrier?

→Yes it is. And the status itself is so different. Syrians used to go get their ID and live there. And then suddenly they saw themselves between Turkey and Europe and too many documentation stuff. It wasn't that difficult in Syria because you are a citizen there, of course it will be easy. You just give your fingerprint and then you get your ID and that is it. So it wasn't easy for them to understand what is going on. Because here Syrians are saying that they are refugees. And when we try to explain to them that they are under temporary protection they don't want to think about it or they don't see a difference between them.

Moderator: Do they ask support of anybody or group in this process of resettlement?

→Yes definitely. This is one of many things. Even people, if they want to make any resettlement they call NGOs. We are not the only NGO here and have hotline, though we are receiving these questions 5 times per day: "How we can resettle in another country?" we answer "you know the process is not in your hand and it is a very selective process from UNHCR and we are even not doing this".

Moderator: What can be done to ease this process for Syrian community? For the ones who want to go?

→This is you can say the international community should take step about it, because Turkey cannot just send people. You should have international community that they want to accept those people. But on the other hand you can say that right now no one want to accept Syrians and that is why they are using illegal ways. Turkey is the only country which is trying to handle the crises. They are getting support. But even though they should consider that some people doesn't want to stay here because they don't feel they integrated. So I guess it is more international community step than Turkey step itself.

Moderator: Do you think other countries have duties towards refugees?

→Sure. Definitely, it is really disappointing what is going on. I have said that Turkey accepted more refugees. And it is still disappointing because you can feel that countries are just trying to protect their borders regardless to the terrorist stuff or whatever. But they are trying to protect their borders because ok we are better than those that they are going to accept them. Those don't have any choice to be refugees and countries keep protecting their borders in a really cruel way. I mean of course all the international community has duties and commitment for those people who was not their choice to start the war. I mean many of them they were not involved in anything. They just left the country because they had bombs or whatever.

Moderator: What do you think about the agreement between the EU and Turkey on the mobility of migrants?

→It is not fair. As I said, even if you support Turkey and give it the money, because at the end it is a country and it just had suddenly 3 million people here. and you gave Turkey this

money not because you want to give humanitarian aid, but because you just want to protect you borders. It is really a shame on the international community. I guess it was unfair like this because you can make other human deal like taking some of refugees and giving them resettlements or just stay away. It is horrible. I mean why Turkey? Just because it is on the borders so they should take care of all this??! You cannot say for example it is an Arabic country so they should accept Arabs or whatever! It is not an Arabic country and you cannot say at least they speak the same language. Especially Turkey is not developed like European countries that is why I guess they should take more responsibilities about this.

Moderator: This is all I wanted to ask. Do you want to add anything?

→Thank you…

Moderator: Thank you…