

# Turkey

## Working Paper

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# **Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship**





## **Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMAP)**

*EduMAP is a Horizon 2020 research project focusing on adult education among young adults at risk of social exclusion. Particular attention is paid to educational policies and practices needed to foster active citizenship among vulnerable young people.*

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## 1. Challenges in AE provision and access

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In the Turkish context, the VYA groups most extensively studied were the Syrian refugees. However, the below elaborated challenges are mostly generalizable to other refugees and, to a certain extent, to other VYA groups.

To begin with, stemming from the quick transformation of Turkey into the country hosting the largest number of refugees in the world, there are some structural or macro-level challenges. Not only are the general participation rates in lifelong learning (LLL) programs quite low (around 3%, compared to the EU average of 9%), Turkey doesn't seem to have an overall AE strategy *vis-a-vis* the refugees. While the former has many and complex reasons, the latter has a lot to do with the above mentioned quick transformation. The mass immigration of Syrians started in 2011, and by 2015 Turkey earned its place at the top of refugee-hosting countries, and by 2018 the number of registered Syrians is over 3.6 million. This unprecedented and unexpected movement, coupled with the initial perception of temporariness, meant that Turkish national education system was caught unprepared. In addition, overwhelming concerns about security has meant that Turkey became increasingly less willing to accept the involvement of many international and local actors in the education of Syrian refugees, making its own task in terms of implementation and budget progressively bigger.

Another set of challenges in AE provision and access in Turkey is related to the specific characteristics of the targeted VYA group, Syrian refugees. An obvious challenge has been the language. The number of Arabic-speaking AE teachers is quite limited and designing courses with translators make them extra costly as well as less attractive for the learners. A second issue, related with the macro-level context discussed above, is the legal status of the Syrian refugees in the country. Presently, the Syrian refugees are recognized as "people under temporary protection" in Turkey since 2014. Before that date, they did not have any formal status. As non-citizens, not only is their access to AE programs restricted, AE providers are also restricted to offer programs specifically targeting Syrians without demanding screening processes. Socio-economic challenges are also very prominent. A vast majority of Syrians in Turkey are from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and having left most of their belongings behind, they struggle to maintain a decent living. Instead of pursuing education, trying to get paid employment in the formal or the informal markets becomes a necessity.

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## 2. Gender and diversity aspects tackled in the studied programmes

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Gender and diversity of learners have been the cross cutting vulnerability in all programmes our team studied. Although in general Participants in each studied programme seem homogenous, they have diverse ethnic, cultural, social and educational backgrounds. In the GP1 our team collected data from Syrian Participants in the largest metropolitan city, Istanbul, and in the GP3 in the border city with high Syrian refugee population, Gaziantep. Their diversity is accounted by the GP programme leaders as in both they created a data bank to follow the needs and vulnerabilities. The GP2 is an AE programme for women in a small town, where their needs and expectations have also been diverse.

It is apparent that in deciding which new courses to offer, gender is a very important consideration. Mixed-gender classrooms are rare amongst courses offered to refugees, due to cultural (i.e. religiosity and conservatism) and socio-economic (i.e. adult men have to work and therefore much less inclined/able to attend such courses) reasons. The VET courses, therefore, are designed to attract women by choosing vocations that are deemed more suitable for women (e.g. hairdressing, tailoring, etc.) both in terms of the contents of the course and the actual vocation after the course. To attract young men, the construction course offers a small payment in cash money for every class attended so that the pressure for earning income can be removed from the young learners. While this has been mentioned as a strong motivator by many of the learners, it is also possible to see it as a potential challenge as learners could be participating in the programme solely for the money. Even so, however, they would receive the training and obtain a certificate at the end, which may change their attitude, widen their horizons, and increase their employability.

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### **3. The concept of APC as it is defined, understood or approached in the context of the study by different respondent groups**

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The concept of APC is used quite rarely both in general and in the context of AE in Turkish legislation. LLL Action Plan 2014-2018 is the primary document in which APC is used in the context of AE. Caution1.4 states “Individuals’ awareness towards being active participatory citizens will be raised”. In this Action Plan, indicators for APC put certain factors of political, social and economic participation forward such as participation in elections, membership rates in NGOs, and number of people having claimed consumer rights.

Interviews with the female attendants in GP2 show that these women from mainly Turkish origins comprehended “activeness” merely as raising “dutiful children for the country and the nation,” representing family in the society along with strong ties among relatives, and showing compassion and helpfulness to other people, especially neighbours. Their responses towards the concept of APC differ significantly from those of female refugees.

We observed differences between the responses of men and women in GP1 and GP3 where learners were Syrian refugees. Female refugees frequently talked about an ideal typical “active individual” in their minds, who can freely go out, who works, earns an income, and serves as a model. To be an active, “strong and self-confident” individual requires good education. For male refugees, there seems to be a stronger correlation between being an active individual and earning money. In general they stated that government must be the provider of all their needs.

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#### **4. Elements that are critical and or significant for enabling learners to become active citizens, or to develop APC competencies in the studied programmes**

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For the VYA learners in the studied programmes, APC appears to refer most strongly to the ability to live independently in a new and foreign environment. Therefore, the following appear as the critical elements:

- **Language:** For the Syrian refugees, learning Turkish is the most important and elementary requirement for becoming active members of the society. Therefore, in addition to Turkish language courses all the AE programmes explicitly try to incorporate language learning in one way or another. Some VET programmes make language courses as prerequisites while others involve various activities to facilitate or improve language learning. Interviewed learners repeatedly emphasized the importance of language in their ability to navigate the daily life and live an independent life.
- **Vocational Training:** A very critical issue is the economic independence, which becomes simultaneously more crucial and more difficult for refugees who may become unqualified and unskilled over-night. Therefore, VET programmes are critical in helping Participants obtain marketable skills and increasing their employability. The point kept coming up that someone who doesn't have a stable source of income cannot possibly become an active member of the society.
- **Trust-based Relationship:** Another crucial factor is related to the way in which the programmes are administered, rather than their subject-matter. For many AE programmes targeting Syrian refugees, the drop-out rates are very high. Establishing close, trust-based relationships with the VYA learners is as important as the programme contents and pedagogical methods, if not more important.
- **Support Structures:** One significant factor appeared to be the existence of certain support structures for the targeted learners' communities. These include psychological counseling, economic aid, legal guidance, as well as medical help. Through these, the above mentioned trust-based relationship is further strengthened and the learners foster a sense of belonging to the community centres, which in turn appear to be important in the development of APC competences.

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## 5. Competencies and qualifications possessed, represented and/or cultivated through by the AE practitioners who contribute to the design, development and delivery of APC programmes for Participants

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In designing and implementing effective AE programmes for Syrian refugees in Turkey, the following emerged as the most important competencies and qualifications:

- *Language and Communication*: While the importance of teaching Turkish to Syrian refugees is crucial, it appears very important on the part of the educators, administrators, and support staff to be able to speak the language of the learners' community in the interim. The existence of Arabic-speaking staff has been crucial in receiving the demands and feedback from the learners, delivering the course materials, as well as establishing the personal relationship between the learners and educators. In the absence of an abundance of Arabic-speaking skilled personnel, employment of good translators or employing some individuals from the Syrian refugee community itself has helped greatly in more effective communication.
- *Inter-personal Skills*: It appears quite obvious that the successful delivery of the AE programmes towards young refugees is as much an act of teaching as it is a form of performance. The educators need to keep their learners entertained, motivated, and engaged. This requires a great deal of inter-personal skills, which include a positive attitude, sense of humour, confidentiality, and an interest in the lives of the learners in addition to language and communication skills.
- *Well-defined Support Structures to which to Refer the learners*: The educators, as well as the administrative and support staff, in the AE programmes need to have a good command of the existing support structures for the learners. They need to be able to direct and refer people to the well-defined support structures, either under the roof of their own organization or outside.

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## 6. Critical factors and conditions (favourable and unfavourable) that affect the potential of AE policies to cultivate APC for Participants

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Turkey is the country with the largest share of NEET among OECD countries in the Education at a Glance reports. The OECD average of NEET women among 18-24 year-olds is 11%, it is over 40% in Turkey. This makes defining, planning, organising, monitoring and evaluating AE programmes for young adults (particularly women) crucial. Nevertheless, there seems some socio-cultural resistance as the traditional job division leaves duties of child-caring and looking after the elderly to the young women which hinders their participation and attendance to the adult education courses. To decrease the level of this resistance depends on the public actors and NGOs working on vulnerable young women. Unfortunately, there is a lack of sustainable performance and systematic approach of civil actors in the field of AE. Having this picture for the Turkish citizens, the massive refugee-influx after the Syrian Civil War since 2011 complicated the AE programs. Because one third of the refugee population, nearly 1 million 200 thousand refugees are in the 15-29 age range. Moreover Syrian refugees in Turkey are mainly from the rural areas with lower education and socio-economic background. There is not enough information on their educational attainment; because of their vulnerability it is not possible to prove the documents. The statistics on educational attainment are based on their self-declaration during their registration. According to this data %33 of the population is illiterate, and %13 state they are literate but with no school experience. This is a great challenge for AE both in terms of quality and quantity. In spite of the qualitative and quantitative challenges because of this phenomena, Turkey adopted an immigrant-focused harmonization policy. Article 96 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, enacted in 2013, defines the objectives of harmonization policy as to provide refugees with information and skills necessary to participate in all areas of social life in Turkey, or in a third country, or in their home country when they return. It has to be stated that Turkey's leading policy to take care of the refugees and their needs rather than focusing on the political agenda is remarkable. Turkey has been working willingly to adjust the institutions and legislation in favour of the refugees. However, there are some challenges to implement this humanitarian approach into practice. Difficulties leading the local, national and international resources and actors are seen. After the coup attempt in 2016 both security reasons and also quality of the content and the educators of the AE programmes designed by the NGOs are restricted. On the other hand, economic, social and other difficulties related to the immigrant-based policies are discussed by the public opinion, which slows down the developments and policies for the refugees and decreases the motivation of the actors.



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## 7. Lessons learnt from laws and policies that contribute effectively to cultivating APC for Participants

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The past record of Turkey's achievement in vulnerable young adult women's education is far from satisfying. However, the current Strategy Document and Action Plan for Woman Empowerment (2018-2023) appears to be ambitious and refers strongly to the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN.

Turkey has shown a determined will to respond fast and comprehensive to the challenge of immigration both on institutional and legislative levels. There is an elaborate action plan in the pipeline. The experience of Turkey with so-called "refugee community centres", which are multifunctional service complexes that provide services in health, education, legal registration and financial and material aids, is a valuable example for the institutionalization of integration measures that promote the occurrence of local support and solidarity networks. "Community centre" is an integrated model that was adopted both by the central and local governments, as well as non-governmental actors, where the cooperation between several local, national and international agencies and organizations is facilitated.

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## **8. Existing practices of information access and communication (emerging patterns and tendencies; people/social networks; media/platforms/channels; content/messages) about adult education in the studied programmes**

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Although the refugees are registered in one city, they are mobile to find a better place to live. Some change their address and their telephone numbers mainly due to security reasons which obstructs the officials, service providers or NGOs to reach them easily. Traditional life style, gender roles, economic needs, ages and education background define their communication practices and media usage trends. Most of them have smart phones and use WhatsApp as the main and the most common communication platform. The other most commonly used platform is Facebook where they follow their preferred institutions and become member to some closed groups in order to receive news about the new opportunities. Female Participants hesitate to use social media, particularly Facebook as there can be gossiping among the relatives and neighbourhood about their sharing. Some interviewees stated that they use YouTube channels to learn Turkish. Having said these however interviews did not give sufficiently detailed data and findings under this topic.

Young male refugees cannot easily attend any AE courses and their communication both with the institutions and with the relatives/friends is limited due to their heavy work load. Female Participants, however have other challenges in accessing information. Strict traditional norms and family rules do not allow them go out freely and work in environments where men are present. For this reason, hairdressing courses are very popular among them in addition to knitting, sewing or painting courses where they can do at home. If they are married they usually have young children to look after and because of the financial difficulties they do not use any social media for communication with relatives or institutions. An interviewed young woman stated that she does not have the opportunity to go out and attend any course because her husband has two other wives and therefore there are too many children at home. Educated women, on the other hand, can access some information via their male relatives rather than from the direct contact with the institutions.

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## 9. Leveraging on VYA's information access and communication practices about adult education

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Both the emergency of the situation and the extensive numbers of the refugee population in a very short time created a big challenge to define and run mid and long term policies about their settlement and integration. Local governments have started skill mappings and need analysis among the Syrian refugees in Turkey. This will allow defining new AE policies and practices for these Participants. As in the GP1 and GP3 the NGOs and local governments set up data banks (such as SUKOM in GP1) in order to classify the vulnerabilities of the refugees and reach the most urgent cases. They communicate these groups via social media and posts prepared in Arabic. Nevertheless it should also be noted that the most vulnerable ones communicate with the outside world less. If they have a disability, low economic profile or some other socio-cultural restrictions as in the case of women among Syrians, they tend to stay at home and not get access to information. For these groups it is important to reach them in person by home visits.

Other Participants seem to have access to mobile phones and follow the WhatsApp networks and groups for information access and communication. Therefore more focus should be on developing new Apps for the smart phones in their native language and target the networks and groups to reach the diverse VYA groups. Another improvement to reach out the Participants can be a holistic approach like the ones in the GP1 and GP3 to attract the most vulnerable ones to the AE programmes. As many of the interviewees commented they are introduced to the new AE programmes when they came to receive some emergency aids or during their registration or during vaccination of their children.

Language, status of being temporary, education level and conservative life style can be listed as the major challenges the Syrian Participants face during their information access both in daily life and in formal context as explained in the earlier sections.

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## 10. Information accessed and used during the design of AE for APC programmes

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GP 1 organizes and records all services through SUKOM (Syrian Social Assistance Software), a software specially developed for this organization. In this respect, SUKOM database is capable of communicating with a large number of refugees benefiting from the services of this association, identifying the various groups of needs and measuring the level of necessity within each group, and the database is activated during each service registration.

Basic information and/or publicity studies on AE programs are basically conducted through three channels:

1. *SMS*: Contact information for individuals who may be interested in or are in need of the AE program is accessed through SUKOM. As well as the people themselves, parents and family members of young adults are also considered to be the interlocutors for informing. Informational SMSs are prepared in their mother tongue, Arabic.
2. *Web Page and Social Media Accounts*: All social media accounts of the AE provider institutions (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) are effectively used in two or three languages (Turkish, Arabic and English) for the announcements of current programs and some other basic information they may need.
3. *Publicity Posters*: Information about the programs are made specifically through the announcement panels of the association buildings and through the placards and publicity posters hung and distributed in public places that are intensively used by the refugees. The buildings where GP1 and GP3 are designed with a multi-service centre or "community centre" concept. Inside the building, there are different units providing legal, administrative services, along with a multi-faceted polyclinic and a rehabilitation centre in which health services are supplied, with a particular focus on women's health. The use of the association building includes refugees from every profile: those not able to use the Internet, those coming for the first time due to legal proceedings, etc.

'Field Trips' are the marginal method when it comes to announcing AE services. The field trips for GP1 and GP3 are composed of the home visits conducted to provide acute assistance after notifications. These trips, as they contribute to keeping the database up-to-date, have an indirect contribution in terms of "information provision about the AE programme and accessing it."



<http://blogs.uta.fi/edumap/>