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From Blame Game to Cooperation: EU-Turkey Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis

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Turkey has generously opened its borders to some two million refugees fleeing the war in Syria. But most Syrians in Turkey live in limbo, some in dire conditions, and many have sought refuge in the EU simply to subsist to survive. Preventing an uncontrolled flow of refugees to the EU requires addressing their destitute state and providing them with the possibility to flourish—a responsibility that both the EU and Turkey have avoided until now. At the same time, even with increased international funding, the refugee challenge may be beyond Turkey’s capacity. The EU’s recent response is a positive step but is unlikely to suffice in preventing further tragedies. The EU must adopt a genuine policy on the matter, taking into account the two dimensions of Turkey’s reality as both a host and transit country for refugees.

As a result of the Syrian conflict, Turkey has become the world’s biggest refugee host country and mostly has done so alone. Official numbers suggest Turkey has spent \$7.6 billion since the beginning of the conflict in 2011 on the 2.2 million Syrians in the country¹ and has built 25 “temporary protection centres” located in 10 cities.²

The EU has allotted a total \$4 billion for the Syrian refugee crisis since 2011,³ but has received fewer than 130,000 Syrians by the start of 2015.⁴ However, Turkey has received only \$304 million from UN agencies, and €44.6 million⁵ through the EU Commission, totalling about 7% of the cost of the Syrian refugees in Turkey.⁶ The Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management (GDMM) has been designated the lead agency responsible for care of the refugees. Turkey claims it will remain committed to its open-door policy, even though the number of Syrians may increase to 2.5 million by the end of 2015. Turkey’s policy is in line with global humanitarian standards and allows for saving the lives of Syrians who otherwise would have remained under fire. But when it comes to long-term care of the Syrian refugees, the

¹ “Turkey spent \$7.6 billion hosting 2.2 million Syrian refugees,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 18 September 2015.

² Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Authority, Disaster Report Syria (in Turkish), www.afad.gov.tr/TR/IcerikDetay.aspx?ID=16&IcerikID=747.

³ “EU Support to Turkey in the Syrian Crisis,” <http://avrupa.info.tr/eu-and-refugee-crisis.html>.

⁴ “Struggling to survive: Refugees from Syria in Turkey,” Amnesty International, November 2014, www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR44/017/2014/en.

⁵ “Turkey: Syria crisis,” http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/turkey_syrian_crisis_en.pdf.

⁶ “Suriyeli çocuklar ders başı yaptı,” www.trtturk.com/haber/suriyeli-cocuklar-ders-basi-yapti-153039.html.

EU and Turkey both have avoided taking responsibility, instead blaming each other for the shortfall. Turkey does not grant refugee status to the Syrians, officially recognising them as under temporary protection, and thus they lack access to important services and employment with which to sustain themselves. The EU, in turn, has focused primarily on fortifying its external borders to prevent the inflow of refugees.

The recent deaths of refugees in the Aegean Sea has pushed EU leaders to develop better cooperation at all levels with Turkey, a key transit country for refugees.⁷ Their strategy is based on paying Turkey to help the refugees there and in establishing centres to ensure identification of those who have arrived to the country along with relocations and returns.⁸ The EU plans to boost financial aid to Turkey to €1 billion in the 2015–2016 period for infrastructure support for health services and education, depending on the availability of EU funds.⁹ The EU has not yet designated Turkey a “safe country” for refugees, due to Turkey’s human rights records and the recent escalation of clashes between security forces and the terrorist Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK),¹⁰ a move that effectively deprives the EU from returning refugees back to Turkey. In return, the EU is likely expecting increased Turkish cooperation to prevent refugees from reaching its borders.¹¹ By doing so, Turkey would help the EU prevent a massive inflow of refugees, instead keeping the problem of caring for them within the country. In return, it hopes for an increased financial support, an accelerated visa liberalisation, and improved political relations including its EU accession negotiations.

Turkish policy vis-à-vis the refugees has not been effective. The country’s security forces have been preventing some refugees from leaving for the EU, but not all of them. It has made several reforms to improve refugees’ legal status in line with international standards, but it has not granted or improved access to several important services, leaving the Syrian refugees to subsist on charity and public welfare. Only 15% of the Syrians in Turkey are in camps, with the other 85% living in cities and towns across Turkey.¹² Most of them live in limbo, some in dire conditions, and many have chosen to flee Turkey to survive. Their weak legal status in Turkey and the country’s usual bureaucratic hurdles aside, Turkey may simply lack the capacity to ensure full rights and additional services to the 2.2 million Syrians now living there.

The announced EU financial aid is still well below the needed amount. Human smugglers will still expand their activities, which most likely will result in more tragedy. In view of Turkey’s shrinking economic, political, social and security stability, and to secure its cooperation as both a transit and a host country, the EU and Turkey will need to develop an adequate response to the Syrian refugee crisis, and one which should also effectively tackle the EU’s closed-door policies.

The Need to Adapt to the Long-Term Reality

Standing between Europe, Asia and Africa, Turkey has a long history of receiving refugees and displaced or expelled people (such as the “white emigres” after the Bolshevik revolution, Europeans during WWII, and more recently, Afghans, Pakistanis, and Africans). But most refugees who have fled to Turkey have left for countries that provided them with more rights and possibilities. Turkey is signatory to the 1951 Geneva

⁷ “Informal meeting of EU heads of state or government on migration, 23 September 2015—statement,” European Council, www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/09/23-statement-informal-meeting/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Informal+meeting+of+EU+heads+of+state+or+government+on+migration%2c+23+September+2015+-+statement+.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ “Draft Action Plan: Stepping Up EU-Turkey cooperation on support of refugees and migration management in view of the situation in Syria and Iraq,” European Commission (fact sheet), October 2015, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5777_en.htm.

¹⁰ “Germany open to including Turkey on EU list of ‘safe countries’: official,” Reuters, October 2015, www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/14/us-europe-migrants-germany-turkey-idUSKCN0S82AZ20151014.

¹¹ “Draft Action Plan: Stepping Up EU-Turkey cooperation ...,” *op. cit.*

¹² “MEPs call for more support for Syrian refugees in Turkey,” European Parliament (press release), September 2015, www.europarl.europa.eu/news/pl/news-room/content/20150914IPR93022/html/MEPs-call-for-more-support-for-Syrian-refugees-in-Turkey.

convention on refugees, but has a geographical exception whereby only asylum seekers from Europe may be granted refugee status.

In recent years, Turkey has gone from being a transit country towards being a target country for refugees. However, this has not resulted in Turkey adopting an adequate asylum and refugee policy. This situation started to change with the arrival of the Syrians. The Turkish authorities first granted temporary protection to them in October 2011. It took a significant step forward in April 2013 when it adopted the “Law on Foreigners and International Protection,” which defined asylum policy, recognised the principle of “non-refoulement,” and created an agency (the General Directorate on Migration Management under the Ministry of the Interior), which will act as the central hub for asylum applications in the country. However, this new law does not lift the geographic exception.

In October 2014, a “Temporary Protection Directive” was enacted to provide all Syrian refugees further protection and humanitarian assistance.¹³ The implementation of it, however, is still far from meeting the objective. Turkey had to centralise its response mechanism to quickly adapt the system to the rapid increase in the number of refugees. However, Turkey’s official capacity to provide services to all of the new refugees has quickly run out and requires external support from civil society. NGOs that implement projects funded by the UN (in such areas as providing medicine) have a crucial role in supporting Turkey’s efforts but lack international funding. They can offer only a limited service, i.e., they can provide medicine but not doctors. Moreover, the implementation of the law and directive has also been slow due to general bureaucratic delay.

Initially, Ankara’s Syria policy was ideological, as the ruling AKP-dominant government wanted to shape the country according to its interests. However, it did not foresee that the Syrian war would last for years. Opening Turkey’s doors to Syrians who have fled the “cruel Assad regime” was seen as a proud humanitarian move and a tool for boosting the image of a “Great Turkey” under AKP among the Arab World, in line with the fantasy of becoming the “leader of the Middle East.” To that end, the former foreign minister and now prime minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, even invited more Syrians than those who would initially qualify as refugees, declaring Turkey’s doors open to whoever is in need. At the same time, the refugee issue has also been used by Ankara as a tool to mobilise the international community to topple the Assad regime and to establish a safe zone inside Syria for the refugees.

Indeed, just like the EU, Ankara is also slow to acknowledge the reality of the Syrian refugee crisis: with no end in sight to the war in Syria, too many “guests” are likely to become long-term residents of Turkey, and potentially, permanent residents or even future citizens. Both Turkey and the EU shy away from taking responsibility for the millions of Syrian refugees, instead choosing to play a blame game. Turkey’s open-door policy might be in line with international humanitarian standards, and it has made a significant commitment, but it also avoids taking further responsibility and has not provided the refugees with legal access to employment and services. Likewise, the EU’s refugee policy might be based on the highest standards but its practice is focused on keeping refugees as far from its borders as possible. The EU publicly hails Turkey’s opening of its southern borders to Syrians, but asks it to close its Western ones, while strengthening the bloc’s external borders. Contrary to its own practice, the EU blames Turkey when, in rare cases, it refugees are turned back from its borders. Also, the EU and its 28 Member States have so far spent only €4.4 billion on the Syrian refugee crisis, including aid to nearby countries,¹⁴ and it had taken in fewer than 130,000 Syrians by early 2015.¹⁵ Indeed, for non-Syrian refugees, the EU’s asylum practices go even further: it blames Turkey for not requiring a visa for too many third country citizens and for moving

¹³ *Official Gazette*, 22 October 2014 (translated from Turkish), www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2014/10/20141022-15-1.pdf.

¹⁴ “Syria Crisis,” *Echo Factsheet*, European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria_en.pdf.

¹⁵ “Struggling to survive,” *op. cit.*

refugees closer to EU borders. EU frontier and border agency Frontex even blames Turkish airlines for being “complicit” in helping refugees arrive in the EU.¹⁶

With the growing number of refugees and the increasing burden, Ankara still spends more diplomatic capacity asking for a safe zone in Syria and toppling Assad than it does calling for more international assistance to ease its burden. At the same time, Turkish security forces actively prevent the Syrians from reaching Turkey’s western borders and patrol the sea, but how long they will continue doing this is not clear.

As a result, and despite reforms that have improved the status of the Syrian “guests” and increased the possibility for international assistance, too many Syrians live in limbo and rely on the smugglers to take them to the EU. In turn, as the temporary Syrian “guests” turn out to become permanent neighbours, Turkish citizens’ perception of the matter turns negative. Turks are resistant to the idea of 2.2 million Syrians as future citizens.¹⁷ They feel no cultural affinity with Syrians, and the historic Turkish mistrust of Arabs keeps them divided.

The potential problems that Syrians may face in their integration in Turkey sounds similar to the case of Turkish “guest workers” in Germany. However, the Syrian case is much greater. Turks who arrived to Germany on the invitation of the German government at least had jobs, accommodation and services prepared prior to their arrival. The only thing missing was an adequate integration policy, which was not foreseen. The Syrian refugees, on the other hand, lack all of these. This risks turning the refugee influx into a social, economic, political and security time bomb for Turkey.

For the EU, low level of funding on this issue and the relocation of refugees risks Turkey’s cooperation in preventing the uncontrolled refugee flow, especially in view of its current economic and political problems. Moreover, the EU’s efforts to control its borders doesn’t free it from the Syrian refugee crisis. There is, therefore, a need to develop a two-dimensional response in terms of EU-Turkey cooperation on the Syrian refugee crisis. Meaningful engagement with Turkey should address both its position as a transit country and its new position as a destination country.

Why Do the Syrians Leave Turkey? Not for “Hope,” but for Survival

Turkey has built 25 well-resourced refugee centres, reportedly the “best refugee camps in the World”¹⁸ and described as “5-star camp hotels,” with access to essential services, including medical centres, schools, vocational training programs and recreational facilities. But there is room in them for only 15% of the Syrians who have fled to Turkey. While there have been allegations of health and security problems in some of the camps, the claims can’t be investigated by national and international NGOs because they are not allowed to enter the camps. In addition, detailed data on the refugees is also rare: a directive in April restricted academic research on refugees,¹⁹ and while the ban was recently lifted, the authorities are reluctant to allow NGOs to conduct evaluation and monitoring projects.²⁰ The refugee issue has not been a hot topic in Turkish politics: despite the 2.2 million refugees, the election campaign in Turkey is perhaps the only one in Europe without anti-refugee voices. The question has been rather focused on how to better manage the issue and the government might be unwilling to reveal data about it to the public prior to the upcoming elections.

¹⁶ “EU border force blames Turkish Airlines for surge in illegal African migration,” *The Telegraph*, 23 September 2015, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/11874964/EU-border-force-blames-Turkish-Airlines-for-surge-in-illegal-African-migration.html.

¹⁷ “Syrians in Turkey: Social Acceptance and Integration,” survey by Hacettepe University Migration and Politics Research Center, November 2014, www.hugo.hacettepe.edu.tr/TurkiyedekiSuriyeliler-Syrians%20in%20Turkey-Rapor-TR-EN-19022015.pdf.

¹⁸ “UN: Refugee toll in Turkey may hit 2.5 million in 2015,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, April 2015, www.hurriyetdailynews.com/un-refugee-toll-in-turkey-may-hit-25-million-in-2015.aspx?PageID=238&NID=81576&NewsCatID=409.

¹⁹ B. Kayaoglu, “Turkey restricts academic research on Syrian refugees,” *Al-Monitor*, May 2015, www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/05/turkey-syria-government-restricts-academic-research.html.

²⁰ “Struggling to survive,” *op. cit.*

The main reason Syrians leave Turkey, however, is not the camp conditions. With just 260,000 refugees in the camps, the remaining 85% of the 2.2 million who arrived to Turkey live in towns and cities across the country, and the number may be even higher due to incomplete registration.²¹ As they lack legal refugee status, many Syrians have spent the last several years relying on external aid, which met only their very basic needs. Their legal status does not allow them to rebuild their lives in Turkey. Despite several reforms, their status limits their access to basic services, such as proper accommodation, nutrition and non-nutritive products, health services, and education. For the many Syrians who live in abject poverty, remaining in Turkey is a life of impossible conditions. They leave Turkey then to find a place where they can legally work and sustain themselves, rather than relying on the meagre aid and few services of those they require.

Of those receiving aid, only 15% of non-camp refugees receive adequate assistance from humanitarian agencies. Many non-camp Syrians rely on nutritional support programs provided by municipalities. Housing is a major problem. The October 2014 Temporary Protection Directive allows provincial governorates to provide housing assistance for at-risk groups, but did not mandate it. Thus, 25% of non-camp Syrians live in ruined buildings or make-shift arrangements, often with no sanitary facilities, and they are regularly subject to forced removal by security forces. Others live in insecure conditions, such as those who rent from private owners who abuse them by charging too much or by forcing them to live in overcrowded conditions, and then there are those who simply refuse to rent to Syrians.²²

Education is another significant difficulty facing the refugees. Some 54.2% of the Syrians in Turkey are under 18 years old and 20% are under 5 years old.²³ According to UNICEF, 400,000 children do not attend school²⁴ and risk becoming a “lost generation.” The October 2014 directive provides access to Turkish state schools but falls short in addressing other issues such as financing or the language barrier. UNICEF, UNHCR and several other international aid organizations have initiated the project “No Lost Generation” for refugee children both inside and outside the camps, and some local authorities are actively supporting refugee efforts to set up schools. Yet this work reaches only a part of the total number of children, and on top of that teachers’ wages are considerably low.

The dire conditions in accommodation and nutrition also affect refugees’ health, leading to diseases (such as skin conditions, diarrhoea, fever or respiratory problems).²⁵ Since September 2013, the government has allowed Syrians access to free health services, yet this right has not been implemented across the country; moreover, it doesn’t cover chronic diseases or continuous treatment. Additional services, such as access to medicine, are provided by the NGOs, which also lack sufficient international funding.

Denied access to adequate outside support, the Syrians are also prevented from legal employment. The October 2014 directive allows registered Syrians with General Directorate of Migration Management Identity Cards to apply for work permits in sectors and locations that will be defined by the Council of Ministers under a separate legal regime, yet no Syrians have been granted this permit so far. The Turkish authorities turn a blind eye to irregular employment, but the refugees become clearly vulnerable to exploitation and abuses of their rights. Women are particularly vulnerable, with some forced by circumstance into prostitution, while child labour is becoming a serious problem. The wages paid illegally employed Syrians often do not allow them the possibility to sustain their families or pay rent, and sometimes the employer does not pay them all because they have no ability to sue.

As a result, most Syrians are being aided by their Turkish neighbours. But as Syrians go from temporary “guests” to seemingly permanent “residents,” the Turkish citizens’ reaction also is changing. Cases of ill treatment are another reason for leaving Turkey. The family of Aylan Kurdi, the boy who drowned in the sea and whose body washed up on a Turkish beach where it was photographed and then seen by the world, had been financially supported by their aunt in Canada, but poor treatment by Turks forced them to

²¹ “MEPs call for more support for Syrian refugees ...,” *op. cit.*

²² “Struggling to survive,” *op. cit.*

²³ “Syria Crisis,” UNICEF, April 2015, www.unicef.org/appeals/files/UNICEF_Syria_Crisis_SitRep_April_2015.pdf.

²⁴ “Supporting the Syrian Children in Turkey,” UNICEF, July 2015, www.unicef.org/ceecis/media_28010.html.

²⁵ “Struggling to survive,” *op. cit.*

take the decision to embark on the risky voyage to the EU. Many Syrians are either unaware of their right to appeal cases of ill treatment, abuse or violence, or, the police are indifferent to complaints from Syrians.

While some Syrians have returned to Syria after facing dire conditions in Turkey, many now prefer to travel onwards to the EU rather than return to the country amidst intensified war. Still, many more Syrians arrive to Turkey than those who leave, either for Syria or to the EU.

The Limits of Hospitality: The Burden on Turkey and lack of International Support

What was planned as temporary, will become long term. Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus claimed on 22 September that the 2.2 million Syrian refugees are likely to remain in Turkey for many more years. This recognition is expected to introduce a new level of efforts by the government to integrate the Syrians into the Turkish economy and education system, yet without granting them a citizenship perspective. Turkey hopes to build a future relationship with Syria by hosting its citizens. The government aims at schooling the 400,000 Syrian children (out of 550,000) who have not been to school, increase their employment and offer them access to health services.²⁶

But all this will come at a cost. Turkey's official tally suggests that taking in the Syrian refugees has cost it so far €6.5 billion since 2011, even though it has not even met their needs. To grant the refugees access to needed services, partly in the hopes of preventing them from going to the EU, estimates suggest the cost of caring for the two million refugees may reach €6.7 billion annually. At first sight, it seems it would be cheaper to settle them in Turkey where costs are lower than in many EU countries, but requiring the international community to spend that much money every year is unlikely, if not outright unsustainable given that the financial contribution to now has been significantly low. The UNHCR's Syria refugee program, 3RP Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan for 2015, remains only 57% funded,²⁷ while its Syria regional response plan for Turkey is just 30% funded.²⁸ The EU's decision to provide Turkey with €1 billion for infrastructure is still less than what is required.

Beyond the finances, Turkey's capacity to offer employment to what is now the world's biggest single refugee population is limited. On the positive side, average Turkish salaries for higher-wage formal jobs have increased with the arrival of the Syrians. Furthermore, more than a third of companies started with foreign capital in the first half of 2015 belonged to Syrians. Nearly \$10 billion in Syrian currency has been invested in businesses or with banks in Turkey.²⁹ Moreover, some Syrian merchants have relocated to Turkey and brought with them with their existing trade links with the Middle East. Syrians have also already opened 10 schools on their own for well-off children, with Baathist propaganda-free books.³⁰ But on the negative side, Turkey's labour force rose to 1.7 million in 2014 with the arrival of the new refugees, which has caused widespread displacement of less-skilled Turkish workers.³¹ If the two million refugees were suddenly granted the full possibility of employment, this could cause new economic and social consequences for Turkey. This coincides with growing risks in the country's economy. Its political turmoil has already decreased investor trust—crucial for its foreign investment-dependent economy. Economic growth has slowed and is expected to be 2.5% this year, below the government target of 4%. The Turkish lira has become 11% weaker against the dollar. Unemployment is expected to rise from 9.9% to 11.6% in 2016,³² and youth unemployment has risen to 17% from 15.5%.³³ The tourism sector, important to the

²⁶ "Supporting the Syrian Children...", *op. cit.*

²⁷ "UNHCR's Syria situation 3RP Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan for 2015," <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=9395>.

²⁸ "Syria Regional Refugee Response," UNHCR, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>.

²⁹ "The Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Turkish Labor Market," World Bank, August 2015, www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2015/08/24/090224b083091fbc/1_0/Rendered/PDF/The0impact0of00Turkish0labor0market.pdf.

³⁰ "Syria's Refugees Need Schools," *Bloomberg*, July 2015, www.bloombergtv.com/articles/2015-07-20/syria-s-refugees-need-schools.

³¹ "The Impact...", *op. cit.*

³² "Turkey's unemployment rate rises to 10.6 percent," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 15 June 2015, www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-unemployment-rate-rises-to-106-percent.aspx?pageID=238&nID=83988&NewsCatID=344.

Turkish economy for balancing its trade deficit, has also been affected by the domestic turmoil and conflicts in neighbouring states as well as the refugees, and saw a 13.8% decrease in the second quarter of 2015.³⁴

Furthermore, Turkey's capacity to be a "melting pot" of cultures as a "natural destiny of its geography," as often flagged by its leaders, seems to be limited under these circumstances. In some cities and towns, the number of Syrians already exceeds the number of Turks. Surveys suggest that Turkish acceptance of the "temporary guests" is decreasing and warn that hostilities as a result might explode. More than 70% of Turks see the Syrians as an economic burden and say they should remain confined to refugee camps. Only 17% of Turks consider Syrians to be culturally similar.³⁵ The negative viewpoints may increase with the granting of more rights to Syrian refugees, and tensions between them and locals may result in more Syrians opting to leave for the EU.³⁶

Moreover, if the Syrians are granted further access to services in every city (such as healthcare, education, proper accommodation), Turks and Syrians will be competing or sharing the same resources. The recent reforms allow the international community to support education, accommodation and health services through NGOs working in the field. However, in the short to medium term, even with increased international financial and capacity support, Turkey's capacity may be limited in its response to the destitution of the Syrian refugees. At the same time, those who still have an eye on the EU for their survival, the security forces won't be sufficient to prevent the flow. Just this year, the Turkish Coast Guard has rescued 53,228 people, and a reported 274 people have died in Turkish waters.³⁷

Conclusion: Two-Dimensional EU Assistance to Turkey—a Transit and Host Country

Now the world's biggest refugee host country, Turkey has been slowly improving the status of its Syrian "guests" since 2011, and increasingly accepting of further international assistance. However, many of the 85% of the Syrians outside of camps live in destitution, with limited access to healthcare, accommodation, nutrition and education, and lack the possibility for legal employment. As they cannot apply for asylum to the EU from inside Turkey, many refugees, fearing for their survival, entrust their lives in human smugglers to leave Turkey, to try to build a life where they can legally work and earn enough to live, rather than simply relying on donations or the welfare system as in Turkey. Turkey's response to refugees fleeing the war by opening its doors has been a humanitarian gesture, but neither the EU nor Turkey will accept their long-term responsibility.

As a host country, Turkey has not yet adapted itself to the fact that the majority of the Syrian "guests" may well become permanent residents or, potentially, future citizens. With new elections in sight, terror attacks on the rise, political and social tensions, and growing problems in the Turkish economy, the Turkish government may not be willing to move quickly to granting the refugees the right to legal employment. Ankara hopes to mobilise greater international involvement for regime change in Damascus or to build a safe zone inside Syria in which to place the refugees, rather than developing an adequate refugee and asylum policy and obtaining the necessary international funding as well as requesting further relocation of some refugees. But this issue risks weighing further on EU-Turkey relations after the elections when the topic may likely become one of the priorities on the domestic agenda.

In viewing Turkey as a transit country, the EU needs to secure the country's contribution to controlling the flow of refugees. Even with increased international funding and assistance, the problem may be beyond Turkey's capacity, especially as the number of refugees continues to climb, even while its economy, political mechanisms and social stability are weakening. The EU seeks to reinforce the dialogue with Turkey at all levels, and the visits between the leaders have intensified (the Turkish president travelled to Brussels on

³³ "Early election in Turkey would prolong economic risk: finance minister," *Reuters*, July 2015, www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/15/us-turkey-economy-idUSKCN0PP0XY20150715#.

³⁴ "Tourism Statistics," Turkish Statistical Institute, June 2015, www.turkstat.gov.tr/OncekiHBArarama.do.

³⁵ "Syrians in Turkey: Social Acceptance and Integration," survey by Hacettepe University Migration and Politics Research Center, November 2014, www.hugo.hacettepe.edu.tr/TurkiyedekiSuriyeliler-Syrians%20in%20Turkey-Rapor-TR-EN-19022015.pdf.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ "Turkey spent \$7.6 billion ...," *op. cit.*

5 October and Chancellor Merkel will visit Ankara on 18 October). While intensification of dialogue with Turkey is a must, at the same time it should not come at the expense of EU concessions on its support for Turkey's political and social stability, which if granted would cause further problems.

Effective EU assistance should therefore include two-dimensional engagement with Turkey, one as a transit and the other as a host country. As a host country, Turkey will still need a considerable boost in international funding and assistance, supporting both locals and Syrian refugees, while the relocation of refugees is needed given the ever-increasing number of refugees. For this, the EU should direct its financial aid to UN agencies already working in Turkey. When viewing Turkey as a transit country, the EU needs to provide the possibility of establishing an admission mechanism for a meaningful number of refugees to prevent them using human smugglers. In view of the approaching winter, the proposed admission centres need to be adequate in size, capacity and speed for the relocation of refugees. Insufficient strategies to deal with the growing numbers of refugees could put them further in harm's way and result in further tragedy.