



*Research paper*

# INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN SHELTERING THE SYRIAN REFUGEES IN GERMANY AND TURKEY

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**Abstract:** About 6.8m Syrian people are displaced and living around the world. The hosted countries had to provide help and assistance to those people who targeted these countries to find a safe and secure place. This research is significant to know Germany and Turkey's experience in their response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Consequently, a qualitative approach has been used based on content analysis and literature review. The researchers used different sources, such as reports of UNHCR, aid agencies, as well as the reports of news agencies. The researchers concluded that the Syrian refugees in Germany and Turkey have experienced some difficulties in the main topics of the research including registration, education, health and shelter services in both countries. In light of the study results and the review of the previous studies, the researchers recommend paying more attention to the Syrian refugees in Germany and Turkey by promoting the provided services.

**Keywords:** sheltering, Syrian refugees, Germany, Turkey, international experiences.

## 1. Introduction

The immigration and asylum issue is one of the main issues that concern international security and threaten global safety, in particular after the Arab Spring (Younesi 2019). The Arab Spring that took place in the Middle East in 2011 reached Syria and resulted in historical changes including the Syrian revolution which caused hundreds of killed, injured and detained people, using heavy weapons and causing huge destruction (Moharam, et al., 2020). Also, it resulted in a huge number of asy-

lum seekers and hundreds of people who lost their lives while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea towards Europe. Around the world, there are over 84 million, at mid of 2021, forcibly displaced people including refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people. 48m are internally displaced as of the end of 2020 and 26.6 are refugees as of mid-2021. The two high numbers of displaced people refer to the Syrians and Venezuelans. It is reported that 68% of the displaced people originate from five counties; Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar. 39% are hosted in five countries, 3.7 m are hosted in Turkey and 1.2 m are hosted in Germany. Only 142,900 refugees returned to their countries or were resettled (UNHCR, 2021 a)

The asylum is a dangerous situation resulting from the continuous conflicts in the region. Moreover, the Syrian crisis and its implications of displacement and killing is a continuity of the crises (Moharam et al., 2020) there are 6.8m displaced people from the Syrian Arab Republic living around the world. (UNHCR, 2021 a) the majority of the Syrian refugees are living in Turkey where the UNHCR reported that Turkey is hosting 3.7m displaced people which represents 65.7% of the Syrian refugees. Then, 14.9% are living in Lebanon and about 7% are distributed in Iraq, Jourdan and Egypt (UNHCR, 2021 b).

Despite the hard economic situation of the neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan, the Syrian refugees headed for these countries while the Gulf countries were supposed to open their doors to the Syrian people unconditionally. Moreover, moving to Europe was very difficult due to the procedures taken by the European Union and the risk of immigration by the Mediterranean Sea (Younesi 2019).

## **2. Research problem**

Over the past years, 6.8m Syrian people are displaced and living around the world. 3.7m are hosted in Turkey and 1.2m are hosted in Germany. Those people have left their country because of the war and to search for a secure place. The hosted countries had to provide help and assistance to those people who targeted these countries to find a safe and secure place. Many international organizations in addition to the hosting countries responded to the Syrian crisis. This research examines the experience of Germany and Turkey's response to sheltering them.

## **3. Research objectives**

This research aims at the following:

- 1) Review the experience of Germany's response in sheltering the Syrian refugees.
- 2) Review the experience of Turkey's response in sheltering the Syrian refugees.
- 3) Compare Germany and Turkey's experience in sheltering the Syrian refugees concerning the Sphere Project and international humanitarian principles.

#### **4. Importance of the study:**

This research is significant to know the country's experience in their response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Many Syrian people are continuing in leaving their country and moving toward Europe and Turkey. They risk losing their lives while crossing the borders. They believe that better life is to be available in Europe or other neighbouring countries such as Turkey. This research is to examine Germany and Turkey's experience in sheltering Syrian refugees.

#### **5. Research questions**

This research assumes that both Germany and Turkey afford the sheltering needs to the Syrian refugees positively and in compliance with humanitarian standards. This research examines international experiences in hosting the Syrian refugees and focuses mainly on the response of Germany and Turkey towards the asylum seekers and refugees and addresses the following questions:

- 1) How was Germany's response to sheltering the Syrian refugees?
- 2) How was Turkey's response to sheltering the Syrian refugees?

#### **6. Research limitations**

The research limitations are the following:

- 1) The research is limited to the countries of Germany and Turkey.
- 2) The research period is from 2015 to 2020.

#### **7. Literature review**

##### **7.1 Syrian refugees**

**Yonesi, 2019, The impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on European Union's security "Challenge and Response**

Yonesi (2019) studied the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on the European Union's security focusing on the challenge and response. He concluded that the conflict forced the Syrian people to see that Europe is a refuge thinking of democracy and social equality. Also, the study reported that the Syrians were subjected to harsh treatment by radical groups.

**The impact of the Syrian refugees' crisis on the neighbouring countries – Turkey as a case study, Moharam et al., (2020)**

Moharam et al. (2020) in their study which examined the impact of the Syrian refugees on the neighbouring countries taking Turkey as a case study, reported that the government of Turkey is trying to afford suitable living conditions for the Syrian refugees, but some of them are exposed to risks especially those who are not registered within the UNHCR. Besides, the government of Turkey is trying to ded-

icate a group of principles in dealing with the Syrian refugees represented in the geographical borders, temporary protection and ambiguous host principle which connected with a group of bureaucratic procedures such as preventing the Syrian refugees from the official documents such as the identity card and prohibiting them from registering within the UNHCR, in particular the illegal refugees.

#### **Understanding Germany's response to the 2015 refugee crisis: Ayoub, 2019**

Ayoub (2019) in her study examined Germany's response to the 2015 crisis by using a qualitative content analysis of a selected number of newspaper articles. She reported that The majority of the studied articles problematized hosting and receiving refugees and focused on the reason behind migration distinguishing between asylum seekers fleeing conflict areas and all others who might be abusing the asylum channel. The findings of the study declared that there is facilitation in the integration of accepted "refugees" but restricted further entry.

#### **The Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Comparison of Responses by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States Ostrand, N. (2015).**

Ostrand, N. (2015) in his paper looked at the costs and burdens of the Syrian refugee crisis and studied how they have, or have not, been shared by the international community, specifically by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It also considers to what degree Syrians have been able to find protection in states outside the region. The paper concluded that industrialized countries have not contributed sufficiently toward easing the burden caused by the Syrian refugee arrival. While there are significant variances between industrialized states, and some states have provided commendable support, neighbouring countries still shoulder the vast majority of the burden in terms of both financial impact and accommodation of the refugee population.

#### **The Evaluation of the Humanitarian Assistance Provided to Syrian Refugees within the Scope of Sphere Project: The Case of Turkey. KOSEOGLU, A. M., & DEMIRAY, E. (2014),**

Their study aimed to provide an overview of the situation of Syrian refugee camps in Turkey which have been open since June 2011 and to indicate the most critical problems taking into consideration the standards stated in the SPHERE. The study concluded numerous humanitarian issues related to the assistance of Syrian refugees, such as health, housing, hygiene promotion and nutrition. The researchers found that minimum standards of humanitarian assistance have been identified, and the standards that have not been fully complied with have been indicated.

## **7. 2 The Sphere Project**

The Sphere Project was started in 1997 by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and a group of NGOs to develop a set of universal minimum standards in essential areas of humanitarian response. The Handbook aims to improve the humanitarian response quality in situations of disaster and conflict and to improve the humanitarian action accountability to crisis-affected people. The humanitarian response's humanitarian charter and minimum standards are the product of the

mutual experience of many agencies and people. The Sphere Project was registered as the Sphere Association in 2016 (Sphere Project, 2018).

The idea that there is a crucial need to find a legal basis for the humanitarian aid concept was generated by a disaster. It was the civil war in Rwanda in 1994 which resulted in losing the lives of approximately 500,000 people. In addition to that, hundreds of thousands were forced to leave their homes to survive. To deal with this disaster, many international humanitarian organizations and movements took place, but there was a challenge to reach their goals. Accordingly, the civil war in Rwanda was a turning point for the development of humanitarian aid in disasters and emergencies when the Red Cross, Red Crescent and a group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) formed the Sphere Project (KOSEOGLU et al., 2014).

The Sphere Project recognizes two main principles. The first principle is to take all potential steps to relieve the suffering caused by disasters while the second is to offer assistance to all victims of various disasters. The Sphere Project presents five main sections: common standards, water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion; food security and nutrition; shelter, settlement and non-food items; and health action (Sphere project, 2018).

### 7.3 Theoretical definitions

**Asylum seeker** A foreign national or stateless person who has applied for asylum, but where a final decision to grant asylum has not yet been taken (Bundy et al., 2017).

**A crisis:** is the situation of a complex system (family, economy, society) when the system functions poorly, an immediate decision is necessary, but the causes of the dysfunction are not immediately identified (Bundy et al., 2017).

**Internally displaced people:** are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee their homes, in particular as a result or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Morina, et al., 2018)

**Refugee:** someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (UNHCR, 2021 c).

**A shelter:** is a habitable covered living space that provides a secure and healthy living environment with privacy and dignity to benefit from protection from the elements, space to live and store belongings as well as privacy, comfort and emotional support (UNHCR, 2021 d).

## 8. Study tool

This research discusses the German and Turkey's sheltering response to Syrian refugees. Consequently, a qualitative approach has been used based on content analysis and literature review. The researchers used different sources, such as reports of UNHCR, aid agencies, as well as the reports of news agencies.

## 9. Study framework

To guide the research progression, organize the research work and make the research findings meaningful the researchers referred to the Sphere project to develop the conceptual framework which used to address the main domains of the study by previous studies. It includes seven factors affecting the shelter and settlement.

The researchers developed the framework to be used in comparing the sheltering response of some countries toward the Syrian refugees who abandoned and were forced to leave their country due to the ongoing conflict. The research focuses on the registration of the refugees as a first step toward protecting them and making them eligible for the other services, then the education, health and shelter.

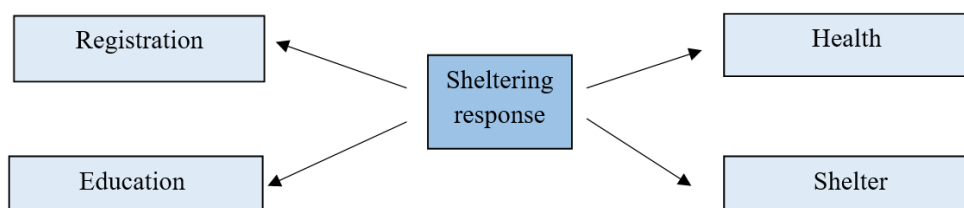


Figure 1. The conceptual framework developed by the researchers

## 10. Content analysis

The researchers read several reports and summarized the meaning in the following table:

**Table 1.** Results of content analysis

No.	Comparison	Germany	Turkey
	Registration	<p>People register from all nationalities.</p> <p>They have to wait between 5 to 20 days.</p> <p>They have to come every day for following up.</p>	<p>Turkey has received the Syrian refugees and granted them unlimited residency.</p> <p>Turkey created temporary protection law.</p> <p>Registration is obligatory for foreigners.</p> <p>Syrians can not get the services without being registered.</p>
	Education	<p>Study in Germany for the refugees is for free or with very low fees.</p> <p>Being a refugee or residency permit are two conditions for joining the academic institutions.</p> <p>All Syrian children with asylum status are eligible for government-provided schooling. Many teenage and adult refugees are currently enrolled in government-run "integration courses" which focus mainly on German language instruction but also include modules on the country's history, law, and cultural norms.</p>	<p>The Turkey government followed a policy of integrating the Syrian refugees into education process and canceled the temporary educational centers.</p> <p>Some children are still outside schools.</p> <p>The cost of high education is still and obstacle for some refugees.</p> <p>All children in Turkey including the foreigners are eligible for free primary and secondary education.</p> <p>For the studying at the universities, the Syrians can apply after having the language and academic requirements.</p>

	Food	The Syrian refugees get a monthly salary for food assistance for a nominal fee.	WFP partners with the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) to provide them with e-voucher assistance in camps. The Government of Turkey manages the camps and provides an additional monthly voucher worth 50 Turkish Liras for both food and non-food needs. Eligible families get cash assistance. The precarious food security situation of the off-camp Syrian refugee households, with almost one-third of the interviewed households being food insecure, leaving the majority of sixty-six percent at risk of food insecurity. Syrian women and children are provided with supplements.
	Shelter	Syrian refugees are provided with cash assistance for rent. Syrians are hosted in temporary shelters. Some families host some Syrian refugees in their houses. A testimony of a Syrian refugee who indicated that he slept on the floor without any blankets for two months. And lived with his daughter in one room.	Shelter assistance was provided including tents, collective centers and rehabilitation centers. Integrating camps. Cancellation of container camps. Reside the refugees in the cities.
	Health	Syrian refugees are provided with health services based on slum seekers advantages, but it is limited. A hospital is next to the shelter, including doctors speaking the language of the refugees.	Two main problems the Syrians face are the legal and language barriers. A study indicated that 20% of the sample was not satisfied with the health services. The Syrian refugees get health services shortly after being registered. Some medicines are covered by the government. Not all medicines are for free. New, EU-funded health centers are opening across Turkey to treat and employ Syrian refugees in effort to remove the language barriers they face when seeking medical care. Turkish and Syrian health workers stand together to deliver health services for refugees.

## 11. Results and discussion

The researchers referred to several available videos, reports and news published on the internet regarding the circumstances of the Syrians who fled to Germany and Turkey. The reports were selected randomly from 2015 to 2020.

**Table 2.** of evaluation of the service

Response to the service	Country	Evaluation of the service				Notes
		Excellent	Good	Average	Weak	
Registration	Germany				X	
Heath				X		
Education			X			
Shelter				X		
Food				X		
Registration	Turkey			X		
Heath				X		
Education			X			
Shelter				X		
Food				X		

### 11.1 Registration

The researchers did not find adequate content in this regard about Germany, but can report that the registration for the refugees is done in social work offices where refugees from all nationalities register. A 5-minute video published by BBC in 2015 reported that they need to wait from 5-20 days and exist at the office every day till their registration. The report showed the refugees dissatisfaction.

While alaraby news website reported in 2020 that the Syrian refugees in Turkey were received and granted unlimited residency. In 2014 the government created a law of temporary protection which include unlimited residency and not returning them. It also includes the Syrians who do not have documents such as ID cards or passports. They need to register to be eligible for the services or assistance.

Franke, M. F. (2009) highlighted that The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) seeks as part of the universe of human rights through refugee registration exercises to locate refugees; it tries to map their displacement within the geography of the emplaced citizenry.

### 11.2 Health

Good health helps the refugees to be capable to rebuild their lives. Accordingly, the displacement can take an important toll on refugees' well-being and health. UNHCR provides health services to refugees so they can be as healthy as possible. By working with partners and governments, UNHCR improves local health services, provides emergency health services, and includes refugees in national health systems and plans (UNHCR, 2021).

Referring to health conditions of the Syrian refugees in Germany as reported in the content analyzed, the researchers found a very limited number of content. A report issued by Neue deutsche Medienmacher on their website indicated that the Syrian refugees in Germany received limited health service provided by specialized authorities. On the other hand, it is reported in a short video published on Youtube in 2015 by DW news agency that the health centres are close to the refugee shel-

ters and provide health services taking into consideration the existence of doctors speaking the language of the refugees.

Moving to Turkey, the researchers found that the refugees face two main problems, as reported in the website of Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies in 2020, which are the language and legal issues. ALBANKALDAWLI.ORG mentioned in 2016 that the refugees in Turkey receive free health services as well as free medicine if the medicine is covered by the government shortly after their registration. In 2017, the news website DW reported that EU-funded health centers are working across Turkey to employ and treat Syrian refugees in order to eradicate the language obstacles. In 2019, the WHO reported that Turkish and Syrian health workers stand together to deliver health services for refugees which bridge that gap and provide good health services.

(Bockey, et al, 2020) indicated in their study that the Syrian refugees residing in the Freiburg initial reception centre, in Germany, are generally satisfied with the services of the centre health care facility. They added that strategies to promote care for females and non-English speakers should be implemented. Also, they referred to the health care outside the center by saying that the satisfaction was not as high, indicating the need to improve quality of care and linkage to regular health care services.

The increase in need, demand, and costs of health services as well as the shortages of personnel and structures, cause a general deterioration of the health system for both the refugee and host community. The unsanitary living conditions and inadequate access to basic health services pose an added risk for the refugees in terms of preventing and treating epidemics and outbreaks of infections (Berti, B. 2015).

The study of (Aljadeeah, et al., 2021) matches with the research finding which reports that language as a barrier to get the needed health service. They indicated in their study in Germany asylum seekers and refugees face challenges when accessing health care services including medicines. Also, they face language barriers.

Also, the study of (Bauhoff, S., & Göppfarth, 2018) mentioned that language barrier, government and administrative restrictions are assumed to hinder access and—ultimately—lead to needless costs as asylum-seekers receive preventable emergency and hospital care.

For the health services, the Syrian refugees in both Germany and Turkey face language barriers. The findings are matching with the findings of Ekmekci, P. E. (2017) who discussed the important effects of Turkish health and migration laws on Syrian refugees' access to public health services and social determinants of health. He found that Turkey's remaining noncompliance with international refugee laws is a major force driving Syrian refugees' flight to EU countries, as refugees desperately seek the right to better health and social services.

Assi, et al. (2019) concluded in their study that the Effectiveness of healthcare services for refugees is limited by language barriers, mobility of the refugees and some legal restrictions.

### 11.3 Shelter

The shelter is a significant survival mechanism in times of disaster, crisis or displacement. It is necessary to restore dignity, personal security, and self-sufficiency.

The displaced people left their homes searching for a secured shelter. UNHCR core part of the protection mission is to assure access to satisfactory shelter in humanitarian emergencies. It provides tents, dispenses plastic sheeting and develops emergency strategies, and others to those who need it most (UNHCR, 2021).

The results of the content analysis regarding the shelter response of Germany showed that after being registered, the Syrian refugees are targeted to be integrated in the community. They receive a monthly salary that enable them for paying the rent fees for each person where 40-50m for person and 50-120m for the family. Moreover, the Syrian refugees were hosted in primary or permanent shelters where a lot of people live together in the same room with limited space. The analyses showed that the refugees have to obey the rules as well as the working staff are responsible for ensuring the implementation of rules.

Some reports referred to the dissatisfaction of the refugees towards the shelters they reside in due to the lack of furniture and enough space. On the other hand, other reports reported that some German people hosted refugee families at their homes.

In Turkey, the refugees received assistance for rent subsidies, tents, and other sheltering needs. Also, the refugees in houses and shelters are provided with assistance to rehabilitate their shelters. In 2018 there were 19 shelters for the Syrian refugees, but since that time the number started to be decreased. The government started to integrate the camps and moving to another step of removing the fixed shelters (containers) and asking the refugees to return to their homeland or integrate in the cities with a refugee card.

According to (Berti, 2015) Turkey has housed roughly 20 percent of the refugee population in 22 camps that were firstly described as “the best refugee camps ever seen”.

Most refugees are in need of help for rent, and financial concerns can stop refugees from finding satisfactory housing, making them to live in sub-standard housings such as abandoned or unfinished buildings or in informal houses, which in numerous cases lack satisfactory access to water, waste management, sanitation, electricity, or unfit during the winter season (Berti, 2015). The refugees’ shelters must be used as long as possible to reduce the environmental effects of the housings. Stronger container housings should be constructed to increase the life span. In order to decrease the energy consumption and emissions which are mainly due to operational habits of the occupants, better insulation techniques should be applied (Atmaca, 2018).

In Germany, municipalities are legally obliged to offer emergency support to people experiencing homelessness, including short-term shelter) Engelmann, 2021)

The findings of the analysis go with the study of (Engler, 2016) which reported that asylum seekers can enjoy hardly any privacy and have continuous stress. The researchers added that opening of temporary shelters has often led to conflict with local residents.

Many refugees who do not have satisfactory resources must find shelter in abandoned buildings or worse, in make-shift shelters. Local governments and some NGOs have struggled to meet the need for shelters, but demand exceeds available resources (Akar & Erdoğan, 2019).

## 11.4 Education

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants identifies education as a critical element of the international refugee response. Moreover, goal number four of the Sustainable Development Goals aims to provide “inclusive and quality education for all and to promote lifelong learning”. For the refugees, the UNHCR associates with governments and international organizations to guarantee quality protective education for refugee children and young people everywhere (UNHCR). Education is needed to help the refugees to rebuild their lives. Education keeps away the refugee children and youth from forced enrolment into child labour, armed groups, and child marriage.

In Germany, all Syrian children with asylum status are eligible for government-provided schooling as reported by the New Humanitarian website in 2015. Many teenage and adult refugees are currently enrolled in government-run integration courses. The courses focus mostly on German language instruction, also they include modules on the country’s law, history, and cultural norms. The same content matched with the Century Foundation report in 2018, which confirmed that all Syrian children with asylum status are eligible for government-provided schooling. Besides, the same website of the New Humanitarian website reported that the study at the university for the refugees is free or with low cost. The refugee with asylum status and residency permission is eligible for higher education. For example, Kiron university was established based on an initiative for free education for the refugees.

Similar to Germany, in 2020 Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies mentioned that the Turkish government followed a system of integrating the Syrian refugees within the governmental education process noting that the same was reported by UNHCR. It cancelled the temporary education centers for the Syrians, but according to UNICEF still some children are not enrolled in the education process while according to the law in Turkey all children have the right to free primary and secondary education including the foreigners. Regarding the UNHCR website, for higher education, the refugees need to provide the language and academic requirements. In 2018 the government contributed in the fees of the Syrian students by not asking for paying the fees for governmental universities.

Providing education has been complex, with the international community and the host governments struggling to house Syrian children and with the local educational system increasingly overcrowded, with overworked personnel and under financial strain. In Lebanon, for example, the number of Syrian school-aged children exceeds the number of Lebanese children in the public school system. Also, there are additional factors for making the education a complex issue is costs of education, the lack of proper documentation, safety issues, cultural issues or language barriers, the curriculum, or the child labour to support their household (Berti, 2015).

## 12. Conclusion

The Syrian refugees in Germany and Turkey have experienced some difficulties mainly in receiving education and health services because of the language barriers. They faced difficulties in registering duration in Germany while it seems that the process is easier in Turkey. The sheltering services in both countries appeared to be not satisfying, as in Turkey despite the increasing number of refugees, the gov-

ernment has started in decreasing the shelters. While, some reports referred to the dissatisfaction of the refugees in Germany towards shelters. Food assistance was available in both countries. Finally, both responded well to the education needs of the Syrian refugees were the education services were available and accessible in both countries.

### 13. Recommendations:

In light of the study results and the review of the previous studies, the researchers recommends the following in order to decrease the vulnerability of the Syrian refugees in Germany and Turkey:

- The hosting countries have to pay more attention to the registration process of the refugees and to ease it more.
- The health services in both counties need to be promoted by employing translators or bilingual staff.
- More attention is needed to the shelter needs of the refugees in both countries.
- More attention is needed to cover the experience of the Syrian refugees in Germany due to the shortage of reports in Arabic in particular.

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