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# THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW REPORT REGARDING ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE SYRIANS UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION WHO LIVE IN TÜRKİYE 2023



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The *My Business Partner* Project which is carried out by Istanbul Gelisim University, is being implemented within the ENHANCER Project, funded by the European Union and conducted by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in coordination with the Directorate General of Development Agencies under the Ministry of Industry and Technology of the Republic of Türkiye conducted focus group interviews with *Syrians under temporary protection* addressing their engagement in commercial activities in Türkiye. The primary goal of the meeting was to conduct a semi-structured interview with six participants, three of whom are already entrepreneurs and three aspiring entrepreneurs, to understand the attitudes and experiences of Syrians towards entrepreneurship.

This report presents the findings of the focus group meeting, which aimed to understand the entrepreneurial experiences and needs of *Syrian individuals under temporary protection* in Türkiye. The study involved posing questions about the participants' motivation for entrepreneurship, the factors that shaped their business ideas, the challenges encountered during their entrepreneurial journey, and an assessment of the processes related to engaging in commercial activities in Turkey. The interview, which lasted 60 minutes and was conducted by the project's training coordinator, is intended to guide policymakers based on the experiences and thoughts of *Syrian individuals under temporary protection* who are either currently involved in or interested in commercial activities in Turkey.

Below are the findings from the face-to-face focus group meeting. Commonly asked questions are marked with "O," questions directed only to aspiring entrepreneurs are marked with "YGA," and questions directed only to entrepreneurs are marked with "YG." The questions are distributed as follows:

**Commonly asked questions (O):**

O1: What is your motivation for entrepreneurship?

O2: What are your thoughts about engaging in commercial activities in Turkey?

**Questions directed only to entrepreneurs (YG):**

YG1: What were the important factors in shaping your business idea? What did you take into consideration when starting this venture?

YG2: What have been the most challenging aspects of your project from the idea stage until now?

YG3: Looking back from where you are today, would you want to start a new venture again?

### Questions directed only to aspiring entrepreneurs (YGA):

YGA1: What factors would shape your business idea if you were to start a venture?

YGA2: What are the things that deter you from bringing your business idea to life?

The expressions of aspiring entrepreneurs are indicated as GA1, GA2, GA3, while the expressions of entrepreneurs are indicated as G1, G2, G3.

## FOCUS GROUP MEETING QUESTIONS

### Question 1: What is your motivation for entrepreneurship? (O)

**GA1:** I want to be an entrepreneur because entrepreneurship offers both financial and personal independence.

**GA2:** I aspire to be an entrepreneur because entrepreneurship signifies good income, independence, and an enjoyable work opportunity.

**GA3:** For me, entrepreneurship means leading a viable and sustainable project and developing a working method based on the type and nature of the project.

**G1:** Entrepreneurship signifies financial freedom for me. Financial freedom can open the doors to different worlds by improving social relationships.

**G2:** Entrepreneurship means elevating the level of my work, making a difference on a personal and societal level, and enhancing my business skills.

**G3:** To me, entrepreneurship represents personal growth and gaining independence through a business idea.

In response to the first question aimed at uncovering the motivation behind participant entrepreneurship aspirations, it is evident that, for the participants, the concept of "entrepreneurship" generally carries a positive connotation. Since entrepreneurship motivation is directly related to the entrepreneur's vision, values, and expectations, participants have answered this question based on different values. Participants represented as GA1, GA2, G1, and G3 generally define entrepreneurship through the concept of "independence." On the other hand, participants indicated as GA3 and G2 exhibit a perception of entrepreneurship that prominently features the concept of "social benefit." It is observed that the motivation for entrepreneurship of these participants is shaped around the axis of social entrepreneurship.

## Question 2:

- a) **What were the important factors in shaping your business idea? What did you take into consideration when starting this venture? (YG)**

**G1:** I am involved in the bag industry, where we produce items according to fashion trends. There is an issue in the market: everyone wants to buy expensive and hard-to-obtain luxury leather bags. Therefore, we need to respond to consumer demands. If supply matches demand, each product produced can directly reach its buyer. Creating a brand and digitalization are also crucial. In this context, I want to create an international brand and establish an electronic platform to sell leather products to anywhere in the world.

**G2:** To operate logically and sustainably, there is a need for good organization and financing. To run a long-lasting business, it's important to research the market thoroughly and analyze consumer needs effectively.

**G3:** While shaping my business idea, I made plans in an innovative and creative way to address societal problems and meet existing needs in society. I also evaluated economic conditions. This allowed me to produce according to demand both qualitatively and quantitatively.

- a) **What factors would shape your business idea if you were to start a venture? (YGA)**

**GA1:** It is crucial to create a strategy to generate a new idea in the market based on the needs in the market or society and to reach the profit goals of the venture when determining the business idea. This way, a successful venture can be accomplished.

**GA2:** Knowing how the product will be sold, identifying the target market, and the consumer profile that can use or demand the product, as well as the innovativeness of the product idea, play a significant role in the success and sustainability of the venture.

**GA3:** Important and fundamental factors for a successful venture include drawing a solid plan, establishing economic trends and suitable goals, completing challenges and obstacles no matter what, and creating a unique environment and brand.

In the narratives of both entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs regarding the realization of successful business ideas, concepts such as "innovation," "creativity," "strategic planning," "production based on market analysis and demand," "production in line with goals," and

"branding" were emphasized. However, the participant represented as G1 stand-out from other participants in their emphasis on the importance of "creating an international brand" and "digitalization" processes.

### **Question 3:**

#### **a) What has been the most challenging aspect of your project from the idea stage of your venture until now? (YG)**

**G1:** I struggled a lot with the lack of financial resources, creating a new logo, and the process of registering the brand.

**G2:** I faced difficulties in having sufficient funding and finding qualified human resources.

**G3:** I encountered challenges in forming a team, finding sources of funding, and obtaining the necessary permits.

#### **a) What are the things that deter you from bringing your business idea to life? (YGA)**

**GA1:** Being an entrepreneur has many personal and societal advantages, but unfortunately, I don't have the courage to bring my business idea to life due to concerns about financing, legal processes, registration procedures, and the competitive environment, which affect the continuity of establishment and operations.

**GA2:** I'm hesitant due to the challenges of securing initial funding, choosing a business location, economic instability, and the complexity of registration procedures, followed by concerns about the extent of competition in the market.

**GA3:** The biggest challenge that everyone can face at the beginning of an establishment is the fear of failure and not achieving the expected goals. However, in my opinion, the most significant challenge is challenging oneself to develop and improve the business idea, following a work system that assists in the development of the business, and not rushing to achieve results quickly. Because businesses, like babies, first crawl, then walk, and then run. So, while I have some concerns about the crawling phase, I believe the outcome will be good.

In the scope of the question aimed at identifying the challenges participants face during their entrepreneurial activities, the responses obtained from entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs generally converge on challenges related to legal processes, financing, and the availability of skilled human resources.

The concerns of aspiring entrepreneurs, like those of entrepreneurs, are primarily focused on financial difficulties, economic instability, the extent of competition in the market, and the fear of failure. For both groups, the common concern in terms of commercial activities is the difficulty of financing.

**Question 4: What are your thoughts about engaging in commercial activities in Turkey? (O)**

**GA1:** I believe that to engage in commercial activities in Turkey, one needs to meticulously examine the market, thoroughly research the registration procedure for a smooth establishment process, develop effective marketing strategies, and also learn Turkish to operate effectively and sustainably. Getting to know the Turkish society closely is also essential.

**GA2:** Considering my goals, my thoughts on engaging in commercial activities in Turkey revolve around the idea that trade requires significant financing due to the large market and strong competition. Therefore, I believe that thorough industry research, as well as detailed analyses at the product and cost levels, are necessary before starting any commercial venture.

**GA3:** There are many different sectors. Before engaging in commercial activities, it's important to study the sectors, identify the needs, and start accordingly.

**G1:** I think that the field of activity for commercial activities, both in Turkey and worldwide, should be shaped according to the demand. For example, in the context of the bag industry I work in, while the world has shifted to digital, having a traditional approach with dreams of maximum profit seems quite utopian. Therefore, establishing an electronic platform for the sale of leather products will increase profit maximization.

**G2:** Engaging in commercial activities in Turkey can be challenging due to high inflation and language requirements. Therefore, I believe that the conditions need to be carefully evaluated.

**G3:** I think that engaging in trade in Turkey is difficult due to the high level of competition.

The responses obtained from participants in the context of this question, aims at highlighting the participants thoughts on engaging in commercial activities in Turkey under the current conditions. Participants generally indicate that engaging in commercial activities can be challenging without necessary analysis. Some participants believe that extensive research and learning are necessary, especially regarding the market, registration procedures, marketing strategies, and the Turkish language. Others emphasize the requirement for substantial financing in trade, as well as the significance of sector, product, and cost analyses.

Additionally, participants suggest that sector selection should be based on demand, digital platforms should be utilized for profit maximization in operations, and inflation issues should be taken into account before embarking on an entrepreneurial venture. It is also a common view among participants that trading in Turkey is highly competitive.

**Question 5: Looking back from where you are today, would you want to embark on entrepreneurship again? (YG)**

**G1:** Yes, I would like to do it again with passion and strong motivation.

**G2:** Of course, creating and earning are very valuable. So, despite all the difficulties, I would want to be an entrepreneur again if I had to start from scratch.

**G3:** Certainly, I would love to.

Based on the responses obtained in the context of this question, taking into account the difficulties participants have experienced, all entrepreneurs expressed their desire to embark on entrepreneurship again, even if they had to start from scratch. Entrepreneurship carries a positive meaning for participants, serving as a passion, motivation, and a source of value in their narratives. At this point, participants express their willingness to continue producing and earning without fearing the difficulties associated with entrepreneurial activities.

## INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

As a result of the interviews, it is understood that participants generally associate entrepreneurship with independence or social benefit. Furthermore, when it comes to successful entrepreneurial ideas, participants tend to focus on concepts such as innovation, creativity, strategic planning, market analysis, goal orientation, and branding.

Participants who are already entrepreneurs mention that the biggest challenges in entrepreneurial activities are legal processes, financing, and a skilled workforce. On the other hand, entrepreneur candidates express concerns such as economic instability, market competition, and fear of failure.

Additionally, participants emphasize the need for conducting necessary analyses before engaging in commercial activities in Turkey, selecting sectors based on demand, using digital platforms, and considering inflation issues. It is also commonly expressed that trade is highly competitive.

However, entrepreneurs expressed their satisfaction with entrepreneurship despite the challenges they face and their willingness to engage in entrepreneurship again under the current conditions.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that Syrian entrepreneurs and entrepreneur candidates face both opportunities and challenges when engaging in commercial activities in Turkey. In this context, it is recommended that policymakers take the following points into consideration:

- Improvement of the legal framework and administrative procedures for Syrian entrepreneurs and entrepreneur candidates.
  - Providing financial support and incentives to Syrian entrepreneurs and entrepreneur candidates.
  - Increasing access to information and guidance for Syrian entrepreneurs and entrepreneur candidates.
  - Enhancing the skills and capacities of Syrian entrepreneurs and entrepreneur candidates.
  - Promoting social integration and networking for Syrian entrepreneurs and entrepreneur candidates.