

A PSYCHOSOCIAL PROFILE OF THE IMMIGRANT: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The migratory flux from the Middle East to the European Union has been on the rise in the past decades due to the almost continuous conflicts in the Arabic Peninsula and to the economic differences between the two regions. Many people were displaced by war and have decided to migrate to the European Union because of the good perspectives the EU Member States have offered for them and for their families.

Although there are many general characteristics of the migratory flux from the Middle East to the European Union, every migration wave has its own traits, its own motives and its own dimensions. Starting from these premises, the specific traits, motives and dimensions of the migratory wave of members of the Hizmet Movement in the past three years will be studied in this article. This movement has emerged in Turkey half a century ago and has become today an important social construct in this country, a network formed of educated people who are involved in developing projects aimed at helping the community.

Many of the volunteers who are part of the Hizmet Movement have decided to leave the country after the political events that took place in Turkey and 2016. This situation has led to a large wave of migrants from Turkey to the EU Member States in the past three years and to a migratory flux with its own traits,

¹ This analysis represents the author's point of view, based on his own experience.

motives and dimensions. Starting from these premises, we will show how Hizmet is an example of a politically motivated, forced immigration, with consequences on employment, family, identity, standard of living, all analyzed from the perspective of the right to emigration according to the UN Global Compact for Emigration developed in 2016.

In this article, we will seek to identify these specific characteristics of the recent migratory wave from Turkey to the European Union, the results of the study showing that this wave has many of the characteristics of the larger migratory flux that connects the Middle East and the European territory and that the characteristics of this migration spurt are predicted by the most important academic theories of migration.

Keywords: Hizmet movement; Middle East; migration; the European Union.

1. INTRODUCTION

The premises of this article are represented by the author's PhD thesis named 'The socio-cultural characteristics of migration from the Middle East to the European Union: case study the Hizmet Community'. Starting from the results obtained during the research phase of the thesis, this article will seek to present what is the place of the recent migration spurt within the Hizmet Community within the larger migratory flux between Middle East and the European Union and to develop a psychosocial profile of the immigrant.

Migration is an important phenomenon in the world of today, but it is not a new phenomenon because people have migrated even since the dawn of our species. However, the magnitude of this phenomenon is new because never in the history of human societies migration on such a large scale has manifested itself (Daştan 2019).

The intensification of the phenomenon of migration during the past decades has been a tendency explained by a multitude of factors, but no theory could encompass all factors that determine people to migrate because the social, economic and political conditions are constantly evolving.

The complexity of the migration phenomenon has been reflected not only by academic theories, but also by official documents of international organizations. An example is represented by the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted in 2016 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, a document that states the need for developing a global compact aimed at regulating migration, at ordering this complex phenomenon and at assuring the safety of the migrant (United Nations 2019).

The new conditions that characterize the migratory spurts are exemplified in this article by referring to the particular situation of the Hizmet Movement, a community that was formed in Turkey in the middle of the 20th century and that is today one of the most important Turkish communities abroad. Starting from the general theories that characterize a migratory trend, this article will seek to explain why the migratory flux from Middle East to Europe represents a particular case and why the migratory flux of Hizmet volunteers from Turkey to Europe represents an even narrower case within the larger framework of migratory waves that have connected throughout history the Arabic Peninsula and the European territory.

2. KEY CONCEPTS

The term 'migration' is defined by United Nations as the crossing of the border of a political or administrative unit for a minimum period of time, crossing that is made by economic migrants, refugees or displaced persons (United Nations 2017). This definition supports the academic perspective on migration, a concept that is divided into two categories: an internal migration (that represents the displacement of a person within the national borders of a certain state) and an international migration (that represents the relocation of people between two nation-states) (King and Skeldon 2010).

In close relation with the concept of 'migration', another concept has to be defined, that of 'migrant'. According to United Nations, migrants can be divided into five main categories (United Nations 2017):

1. Illegal migrants, who do not have the necessary permits to stay in a country. Usually, the illegal migrants are the ones who seek for a job and for a better life.
2. Business migrants, who usually migrate because they work in a multinational company that assigns them in a new position in another country. Unlike illegal migrants, business migrants are usually welcomed by their new countries because they bring added value to the national economy.
3. Displaced migrants, who seek refugee or are forced to move in order to respond to an external determinant (e.g. a natural disaster).
4. Temporary migrants, who usually work for a fixed period of time in a new country and then, when the contract ends, return to their country of origin.
5. Migrants from reunified families, who are people with spouses or other close relatives who have migrated at a previous moment in time.

The concept of 'migration' can be constructed not only through its definition or its types (e.g. temporary migration, business migration etc.), but also through the academic theories that have been developed over time in order to explain this complex phenomenon that characterizes the world of today. Some of the most important theories related to migration that were developed over time are the structural functionalism theory, which is based on the assumption that communities tend to disintegrate over time (Harper 2011), the social conflict theory, which is based on Karl Marx's work and which identifies as one of the main determinants of migration the profound conflicts within a nation, the social pressures and the social fragmentation (Homer-Dixon 1994), the symbolic interactionism theory, which explains how the identity of migrants is changed during the process of displacement (Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995), the social politics theory, constructed around the concept of 'diaspora' (Hirschman 1978), the historic theories, which identify several 'push' and 'pull' factors (some of the pull factors that influence migration are the feeling of security, the family ties, the industrial development, the better life conditions etc., while some of the push factors influencing migration are war, discrimination, pollution or natural disasters) (Lee 1966) and the workforce migration theories, which are comprised

of five main categories of theories: the world systems theory, the relative privation theory, the new work economy theory, the dual work market theory and the neoclassical economic theory (Jennissen 2007).

Although they do not form an academic theory, the principles of the 2016 New York Declaration, encompassing the recent developments on the international stage in relation to the migration phenomenon, are important in explaining the status immigrants have today. In 2016, at the UN Summit held on 19 September, the participants have adopted a declaration by which they have committed to protect refugees' human rights, to immediately provide education for migrant children, to condemn xenophobic manifestations against migrants and to improve the contributions that migrants have to the social and economic development of the host countries (Refugees and Migrants 2019). This declaration not only creates the conditions for improving the situation of the immigrant, but also strengthens the right to migration and the rights immigrants have in the host countries.

As a result of this short review of the elements that form the theoretical foundation of the concept of 'migration', two important characteristics of migration stand out: that migratory fluxes may consist of many types of migrants (e.g. displaced migrants, migrants who seek to reunite with their families etc.) and that migration is a phenomenon that cannot be explained by a single theory. At the end of the article, after presenting the results obtained, we will try to develop a psychosocial profile of the immigrant, to determine in what category of migrants can the people from the Hizmet Movement be placed and which of the migration theories that were presented are best applied to the specific situation of the recent migration within the Hizmet Movement.

3. HIZMET MOVEMENT. ORIGIN AND SHORT HISTORY

The historical perspective of the Hizmet Movement began in the 1970s, when Fethullah Gulen's vision regarding the Turkish society began to become more and more popular and when the first study centers led by Gulen were opened in the city of Izmir and in the wider Aegean coast region. These educational centers

represented an opportunity for local communities because educational opportunities were scarce and, in this context, these institutions represented an opportunity for students to integrate into the big cities and to continue their secular education, without being in danger of being influenced by the politicized environment of those times (Çetin 2012).

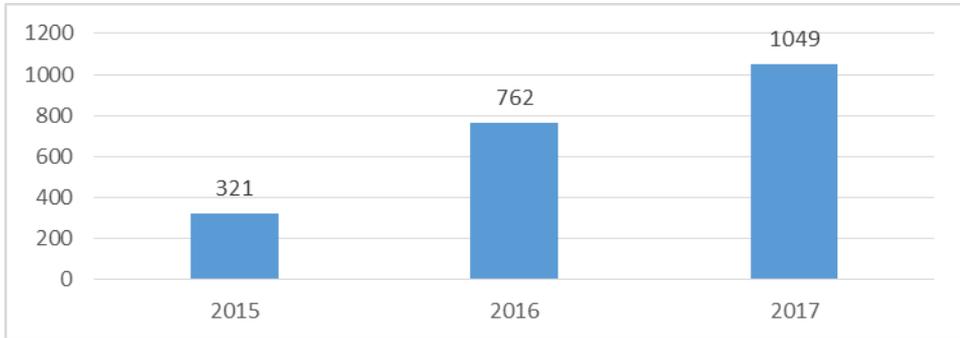
Because of the opportunities it provided for the education of Turkish youngsters and because of the opportunities it provided for the large masses of people, the Hizmet Movement has become in the following decades an important social movement in Turkey and the ideas of this movement have expanded over the Turkish borders through the educational projects developed around the world (Pandya 2012). This means that there was always a significant flux of migration within the Hizmet Movement, a voluntary migration determined by the desire of Hizmet adherents to develop projects in the most disadvantaged communities in different countries on several continents.

The voluntary wave of migration within the Hizmet Movement, that has been developing for decades, has been replaced by a forced displacement phenomenon that began in 2016 due to the political conditions in Turkey (Michel 2016).

The period from July 2016 to the present day has been a critical point for the Hizmet Community, whose followers were forced to emigrate (Watmough and Ozturk 2018). Many people were arrested, several companies were closed and assets were seized by the Turkish authorities (Rehab 2017), forcing the adherents of the Hizmet Movement to emigrate.

The future of the movement is uncertain, given that its supporters are currently in a transnational political exile (Watmough and Ozturk 2018). The severity of the migration flux that took place in the past three years within the Hizmet Movement is reflected by official data which shows that the number of asylum applications submitted by Turkish nationals in one of the European Union's Member States has significantly varied before and after the failed coup of 2016.

Average monthly asylum applications submitted by Turkish nationals between 2015 and 2017



Source: European Data Journalism Network. 2018. *Turkey: The number of asylum requests has tripled over the last two years*, [website], <https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/eng/News/Data-news/Turkey-The-number-of-asylum-requests-has-tripled-over-the-last-two-years> (accessed on 20.10.2019)

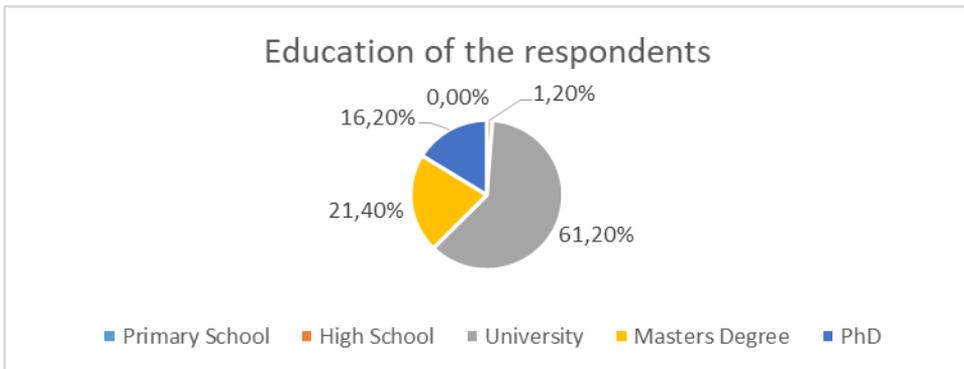
The data in the figure above shows that the number of asylum applications have risen by approximately 300% in a period of just two years. This statistical information shows the impact that political events of 2016 coup has had on the migration flux from Turkey to the EU and indirectly reveals the tragedy that many followers of Hizmet Movement have suffered. This tragedy represents the premises of the present article, that will try to construct a psychosocial profile of the immigrant and to identify the main characteristics of this recent migratory flux that has connected Turkey and the European Union after the events of 2016.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main objective of the study is that of constructing a psychosocial profile of the immigrant, that of identifying the main elements that characterize the recent migratory flux within the Hizmet Movement, that of assigning the Hizmet migrants to one of the general categories of migrants identified in the academic literature and that of establishing what migration theories are best applied to the

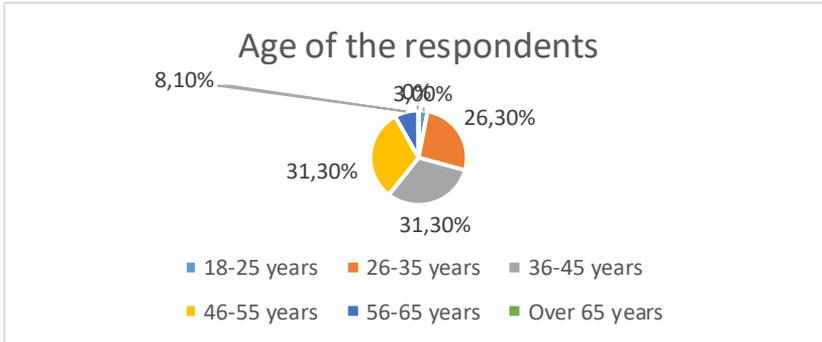
specific situation of migrants who have left Turkey and found refuge in one of the EU states in the past three years.

The data was collected through a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire, the total number of respondents being 174 (154 respondents for the questionnaire and 20 respondents for the interview). These respondents made up the research universe that was composed mainly by people who emigrated from Turkey after 2016. Because the most important projects of the Hizmet Movement are the ones developed in the educational system, most of adherents to this movement are highly educated people. This characteristic reflects in the sample selected for this study, which consists almost entirely of people who have as their last level of study the university or a higher form of education (the master's degree or PhD).



This high level of education of the majority of those who emigrated after the political events of 2016 reflects the socio-professional structure of the majority of those who are part of the Hizmet Movement and who emigrated in the past three years (university professors, journalists, doctors and businessmen recognized in the communities they belong to etc.).

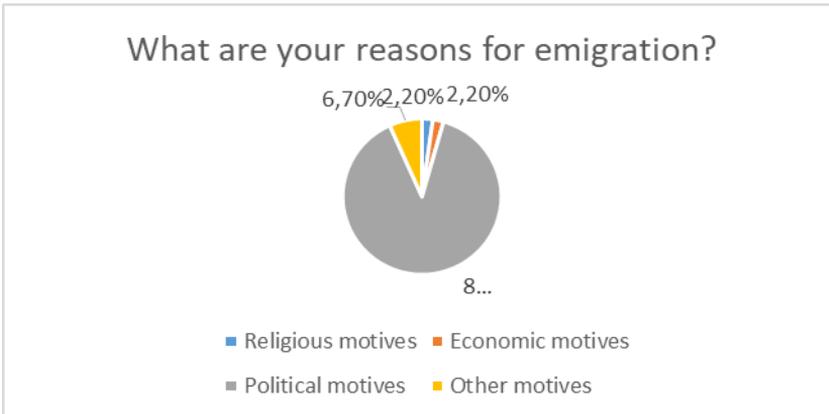
From the previous characteristic of the investigated population results indirectly and another, represented by the structure according to age. Most of the respondents are professionally active persons, aged between 26 and 55 years.



As a result, the data obtained will reveal the main characteristics of a migratory flux composed mainly of young, active and educated people who have left Turkey after the political events of 2016.

5. DATA INTERPRETATION

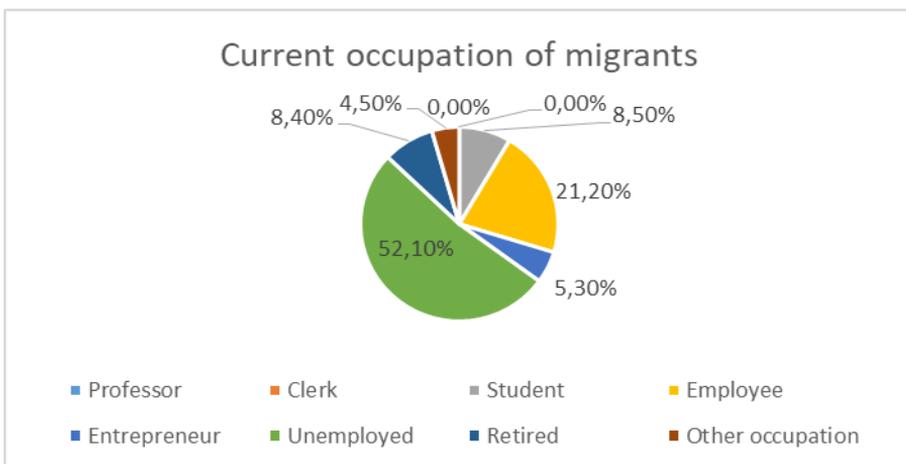
All respondents have had to answer an important question at the beginning of the interview or the questionnaire, showing what were their main reasons for emigration.



When asked which factors were most important in their decision to emigrate, most of the respondents have indicated factors like 'personal security' or 'social

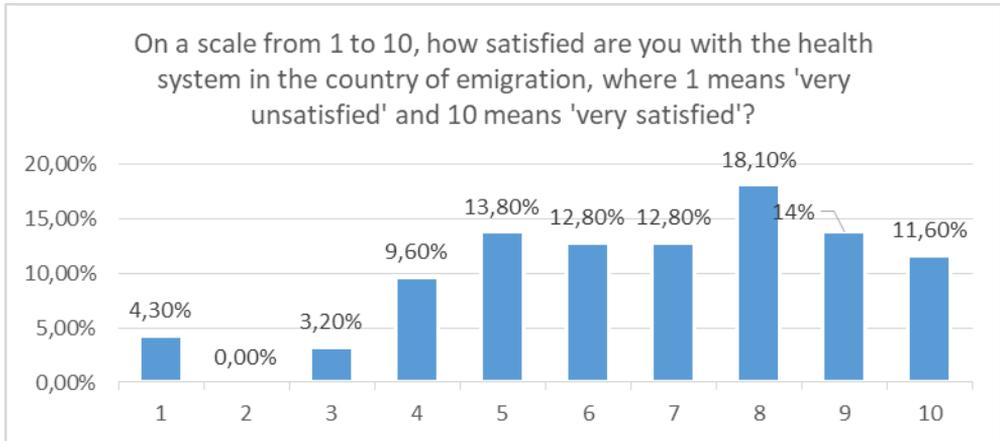
security' and less factors like 'the low income' or 'the poor infrastructure in Turkey compared to the infrastructure in the EU'. This confirms that the reasons for migration within the Hizmet Community are not economic in nature, but rather political, determined by the fear of persecution after the political events of 2016.

The way in which the lives of immigrants changed radically after the events of 2016 is reflected not only by the phenomenon by which many families were disbanded, but also by the speed with which the status of immigrants in the society has changed in only months. About one-third of those who answered the questionnaire were, before 2016, teachers, while many of the respondents were civil servants, doctors, lawyers, journalists, public relations specialists or engineers. However, at present, most of the respondents are unemployed and only about 20% of them have managed to work in one of the companies of their host countries and thus have a stable income.



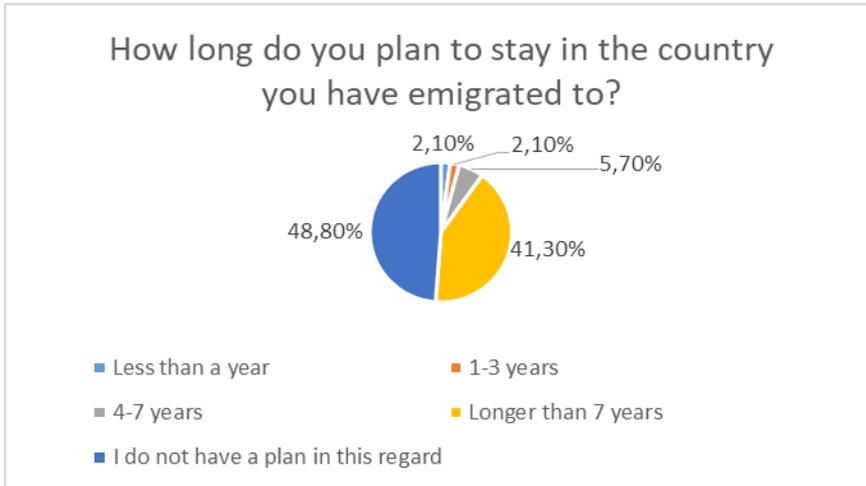
The results have shown that the success of the integration process of those who have fled Turkey in recent years depended largely on how they managed to adapt to the education and health systems in EU countries, on the one hand, and the degree to which the educational system in these countries is able to solve the specific problems of migrants, on the other hand. The respondents have

expressed a relatively high level of satisfaction with the education and health systems found in their new host countries.

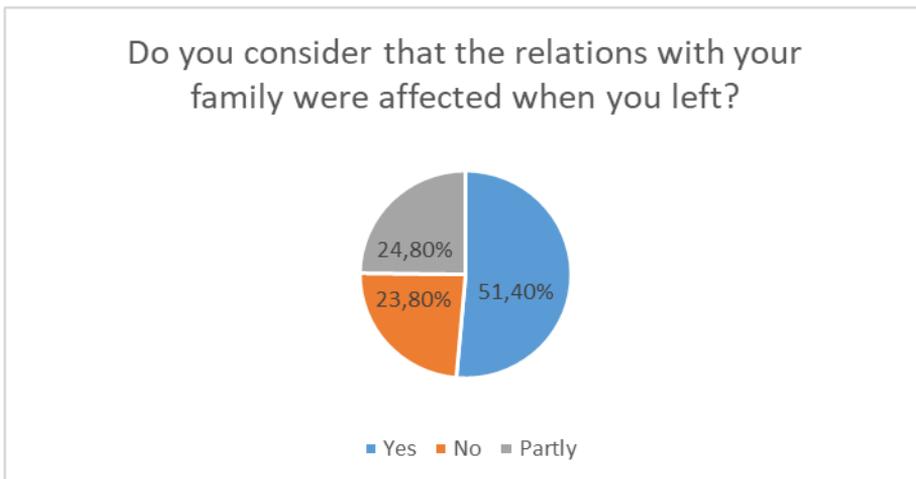


However, there are some problems both in the education system and in the health system. When talking about the education system, for example, many of the respondents indicated that they have difficulties to integrate because the diplomas they have obtained previously are not always recognized. On the other hand, when talking about the medical system, many of the respondents indicated that their health condition has worsened in recent years, due to the tension they experienced after the events of 2016, so that there is additional pressure on the public health systems in the EU countries.

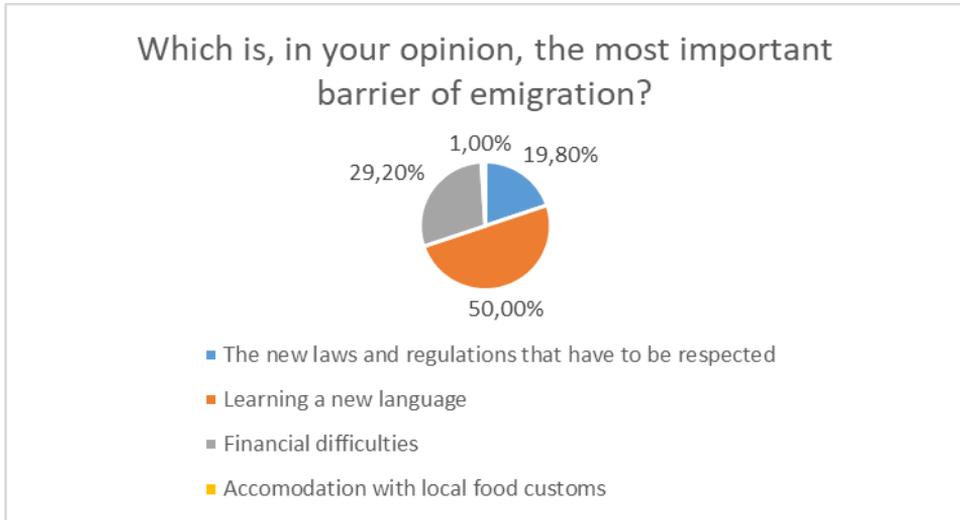
This pressure is likely to be present for a long period of time since most of the migrants intend to settle permanently in their host countries, knowing that the conditions in Turkey will likely not change and that they will not be able to return home.



One of the main reasons most of the migrants would want to return home is that many of them had to leave their families behind and want to reunify with their loved ones.



Another fact that explains the situation of the migrants in their host countries in the EU is represented by the multiple obstacles many of immigrants have had to overcome when trying to integrate in the new societies.



These results show that the immigrants have had to overcome barriers similar to those that most immigrants have to overcome. Although the migration phenomenon within the Hizmet Movement is similar in many ways to the migration phenomenon in general, it differentiates itself from several perspectives: it has a specific determinant (the political events of 2016), it represents a forced displacement (due to fear of persecution), it is not determined by economic factors (since most of the migrants have had a good financial status in Turkey) and it is not permanent (since most of the migrants plan to return home as soon as the political situation allows them to).

6. CONCLUSIONS

Through this study, we have intended to make a contribution in terms of knowledge in the field of the migration phenomenon from the Near East to the European Union in general and within the followers of the Hizmet Community in particular. By analyzing the data obtained from the application of the interview and the questionnaire among immigrants who are currently dispersed on all continents of the globe and especially in the EU, we could highlight not

only which of the socio-cultural factors that favor migration from the Near East to the European Union can be applied to the migration phenomenon, but also certain factors that do not necessarily characterize the migration phenomenon between the regions geographies of the Middle East and the EU, but which are specific to the current situation that characterizes the status of people in the Hizmet Community who have emigrated in the last three years.

Indirectly, the study allowed us to draw some conclusions about the situation of migrants from the Middle East and who are currently settled in one of the member countries of the European Union. The study has allowed us to highlight how immigrants were welcomed in the EU states and how these people have managed to adapt in terms of integration into social and economic life. Most of them have had success in adapting to their new life, but the process of adaptation is ongoing and probably will not end in the near future, which stresses again the importance of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration adopted in 2016 and aimed at ensuring that the rights of the migrant are respected in the host country.

Another important conclusion that can be drawn after analyzing the results obtained is that the massive phenomenon of migration from Turkey to EU countries in the past three years has left its deep imprint on the social life, reflected in the basic cell of any society: the family. Many families were shattered, many of the immigrants making the decision to emigrate in a very short time and thus lacking the necessary time to make all the needed preparations to be able to emigrate with their spouse or children. Even those who managed to emigrate with close relatives, left behind family members. The impact of the emigration phenomenon was even higher as most of the immigrants had a good material situation in their home country, but they lost all their wealth and so must now live with minimal financial resources in their new host countries of the European Union.

The problems faced by immigrants are not only related to the fact that their families have been disbanded or to the precarious material situation they have in the new countries of residence, but also to the inherent difficulties most of the people face in their new countries: the need to learn a new language, the need to adhere to a set of values that is often completely different from laws and rules of

conduct that migrants are used to, or the need to interact with people who have a different religion and culture. A special difficulty of the migrants from the Hizmet Community was derived from the fact that most of them were professionally active in their country of origin, with important contributions in areas such as education, journalism or medicine and whose work was highly recognized by the Turkish society. Now, most of these people are unemployed, with little prospect of finding a place to work and depending on the protection of their host states in the context provided by the 2016 New York Declaration of the United Nations.

The results of the study allow us to show what are the categories of migrants identified by the specialists that are best applied to the specific situation of the volunteers of the Hizmet Movement. They are not illegal migrants or business migrants who move to another country because of their job, but can be placed in the other three important categories of migrants identified by the literature: they are displaced migrants because they are seeking refugee in order to respond to an external determinant (the political events of 2016 in this case), they are temporary migrants (because they plan to return home when the political conditions in Turkey will change) and they are migrants from reunified families (because, in many of the situations, one member of the family has migrated immediately after the events of 2016, he or she being followed by other members of the family in the coming years).

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