



alman  
iřbirlięi

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

In cooperation with:

Implemented by:

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
f#r Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



# Growing Together





# Growing Together

How volunteerism fosters social cohesion between Syrian and Turkish young people

# Contents



10	<b>Introduction</b> A fragile co-existence Creating a shared future for Syrian refugees and members of Turkish host communities
12	<b>Building a new generation of youth leaders</b> The Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand projects catalyse community action for social cohesion Turning motivated young people into confident, well-prepared volunteers 3,680 activities which allow volunteers' skills and passions to shine Sowing the seeds of social cohesion
24	<b>Promoting life skills and tolerance, on and off the field</b> The Sport for Development approach comes to Turkey Shifting the focus from performance to participation Turning 'Syrians' and 'Turks' into teammates Farther, higher, faster: Sports for social cohesion takes off Lasting benefits for communities
30	<b>Fostering self-expression through arts, science and culture</b> Discovering and learning together at Creative Time workshops Opportunities to try out something new, with new people
32	<b>Creating welcoming spaces for people to meet and engage</b>
33	<b>Celebrating youth and volunteerism as a shared identity</b> Youth Summit brings together 200 volunteers to learn, share and network
34	<b>Visioning a joint future, together</b> The Dialogue for Social Cohesion explores the 'new' Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa
36	<b>Growing together</b>



# Welcome Messages

## Message from Erkan ŞAMILOĞLU, Ministry of Youth and Sports

Humans have a very strong inclination to share – not only with their own relatives, but with others as well. In other words, humans are volunteers. The desire to share food and water, to offer emotional support and assistance, runs deep within us.

The world's problems are on the rise, and so are efforts to find solutions. At the local, national and international level, volunteers are active partners in the search for solutions to pressing social problems. Volunteering, which is a local, national and transborder activity, is a common value which the modern world tries to bring to the present and the future without breaking from tradition. Volunteers are people who contribute to the society and who play an active role in solving social problems.

Turkey is one of the countries hosting the highest numbers of refugees in the world, having opened its doors to millions of people fleeing the political crisis in Syria. We have mobilised all of our institutions and citizens to welcome refugees and have accepted them as our brothers and sisters. To ensure their social integration in Turkey, we have implemented many projects, including some joint projects with international partners. Volunteers are among the most important supporters of projects which help refugees get used to their new neighbourhoods and help our citizens get used to them.

Recognising the importance of volunteerism for our country and for the world, our Ministry has declared 2019 the Year of Volunteering. We will be implementing many more activities which offer volunteering opportunities to our youth. This will help to increase the overall number of volunteers and ensure that people from various sectors of society have the chance to participate. I am certain that this year our volunteers will play an even more important role in ensuring social cohesion between Syrian and Turkish communities.

**Erkan Şamiloğlu**

Head of Education and Guidance Services,  
Ministry of Youth and Sports

## Message from Joachim Scheurer, GIZ

Since 2011, when the Syrian crisis started, Turkey has taken more than 3.6 million Syrians under temporary protection, mounting a massive emergency response to meet refugees' basic needs and laying the foundation for their longer-term economic and social integration in Turkey.

Despite these tremendous efforts, significant challenges are faced in absorbing such a large number of refugees into the education system, labour markets and community life. Tensions between the Syrian and Turkish populations are on the rise, and measures to support social cohesion have taken on greater urgency. As the majority of Syrian refugees in Turkey are under the age of 30, initiatives aimed at strengthening relationships between young Syrians and Turks are particularly important.

Germany is working closely with Turkey to strengthen responses to the needs of Syrian refugees and the Turkish host communities of which they are a part. The Education Programme for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities (BILSY), which aims to promote social cohesion among young people both within the formal education system and through volunteerism in the community, is one of several initiatives implemented by GIZ on behalf of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. These projects, which are coordinated through the Support to Refugees and Host Communities Cluster, make up the largest section of GIZ's portfolio in Turkey.

Since 2016, BILSY has adapted and scaled up innovative approaches to fostering social cohesion in seven provinces across Turkey. Outside the formal education system, the programme is driven forward by a legion of trained, motivated young Syrian and Turkish volunteers who are committed to engaging in their communities and bringing people of different backgrounds together. It has been inspiring to see this new generation of young leaders channel their energies and talents into intercultural activities which strengthen connections between refugees and members of host communities.

Partnerships are at the core of our work. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of all GIZ's partner institutions in the BILSY programme, both Turkish and German, and commend them on their marvellous work.

**Joachim Scheurer**

Project Director,  
BILSY



## Acknowledgements

GIZ would like to thank the Ministry of Youth and Sports for the fruitful cooperation in implementing the Education Programme for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities (BILSY). It is also grateful to its partners at ASAM, Conflictus, GAP Youth Association, the German Olympic Sports Confederation, Turkish Olympic Committee, Syrian Sports Commission, Iqra School, the Goethe Institute, Her Yerde Sanat, MUDEM and the municipalities of Gaziantep, Kırıkhan and Şanlıurfa for the close and constructive working relationship over the past three years.

Many individuals have contributed to the development of this publication. GIZ extends its appreciation to: Önder Yalçın, Director of Migration Department, and Hüseyin Ateş, Director of Museums and Libraries, Gaziantep Municipality; Elif Kalan, Conflictus; Irem Umuroğlu, MUDEM; Gamze Erkmen, ASAM; Tijen Togay and Aya Mustafa, Goethe Institut; Derya Özkök, Gasmek; and Sascha Bauer, Sevda Akgün, Mehmet Emin Bayseckin and Betül Orta, DOSB. Thanks also go to the following trained multipliers who shared their experiences: Ziad Ahmad, Feras Akdağ, Veysel Büyükkılıç, Delal al Muallem, Duygu Evis, Fatma İmirgi, Alaa Khabbaz, Subhi Moazzen, Zahra Omar, Barış Özalkan, Jasmin Toprak, and Aysel Uzun.

The team implementing the BILSY programme on behalf of GIZ provided significant assistance throughout the development of this publication. Special thanks go to Joachim Scheurer, BILSY project director, and Jasmin Dirinpur, head of the non-formal education component, as well as to Mehmet Akdemir, Ali Almana, Irem Nur Yildiz, David Debattista and Khaled Alshurafa for their tireless efforts in support of social cohesion among Syrian and Turkish youth.

# Introduction

## A fragile co-existence

Since the start of the civil war in Syria, more than 3.6 million Syrians have found refuge in neighbouring Turkey, where the authorities in 2011 instituted a generous open-door policy for Syrians fleeing violence. The vast majority of Syrians in Turkey live not in refugee camps, but in urban areas, amidst the local host population.

Although they are part of the fabric of city life – seeking and receiving health services at clinics and hospitals, renting apartments from local landlords, and shopping at neighbourhood businesses – Syrian refugees in Turkey do not fully share in community life. A significant proportion of Syrian children do not yet regularly attend school and few Syrians have official work permits allowing them to take up formal sector jobs. Uncertain about how long they will remain in Turkey, many Syrians have not made learning Turkish a priority. At the same time, the official response to the large-scale arrival of Syrian refugees has had an emergency character, focusing on the provision of basic services. While programmes ‘for Syrians’ abound, little attention has been paid to closing the social distance which has opened up between the two communities. Seven years into the Syrian conflict, refugees and members of Turkish host communities are leading parallel rather than shared lives.

Turks have generally accepted the need to support Syrians to escape war and persecution, but surveys show that compassion is waning and that many are wary of the idea of a shared future<sup>1</sup>. Among Turkish residents, the perception that Syrian and Turkish communities have little in common is on the rise. In addition, the arrival of huge numbers of refugees has put pressure on social services, the housing market, and public schools, particularly in the southern provinces of Gaziantep, Hatay and Şanlıurfa, where Syrians now make up between 20 and 30 per cent of the population<sup>2</sup>.

Beyond this, the lack of direct contact between the two populations contributes to negative stereotyping and prejudice, creating fertile ground for misunderstandings to spiral into open hostilities. Fueled by social media, rumors and minor altercations can lead to violence. Worryingly, in 2017 the rate of violent incidents between Syrian refugees and members of host communities rose sharply, particularly in large metropolitan areas such as Istanbul and Ankara<sup>3</sup>.

## Creating a shared future for Syrian refugees and members of Turkish host communities

The presence of large numbers of Syrians in Turkey was initially seen – by Turkish authorities and refugees alike – as a temporary phenomenon. However, as the conflict in Syria becomes ever more protracted, the prospects for Syrians to return home have dimmed. While initial strategies were aimed at providing protection and assistance to registered refugees through specially-targeted programmes and benefits, the challenge now is to ensure the social and economic integration of Syrian refugees into Turkish host communities and to strengthen social cohesion between the two populations.

Given that just over 70 per cent of Syrians in Turkey are under the age of 30<sup>4</sup>, efforts to strengthen social cohesion must involve young people. Expanding access to educational and training opportunities is a major priority, but equally important are local initiatives which foster trust and a sense of community among Syrian and Turkish children and youth. Opportunities for young people to meet, interact and get to know one another make it more likely that Syrian and Turkish communities gradually stop living their lives in parallel and begin growing together.



## The Education Programme for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities

Since 2016 the Education Programme for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities (BILSY) has been tackling this challenge by expanding educational opportunities for Syrian and Turkish young people in host communities across the country. BILSY is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as part of the German government’s support for Turkey’s response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

BILSY has two main components. The first component focuses on the formal education system, working with Turkey’s Ministry of National Education to rehabilitate school facilities, to improve transportation to schools and to train public school teachers on intercultural skills. The second component focuses on non-formal education, creating cultural and recreational opportunities for young people outside school settings.

This publication describes the approach of BILSY’s non-formal education component to strengthening social cohesion between Syrian and Turkish young people in seven provinces of Turkey. It shows how an approach based on volunteerism can bring together refugees and members of host communities in enriching face-to-face interactions whose positive benefits extend deep into both communities. By creating opportunities for young people of similar ages and interests to meet one another, it enables relationships to form which transcend ethnic, national and religious ties. In contexts of forced displacement, this can help to strengthen social cohesion and thereby the fabric that holds societies together<sup>5</sup>.

## Diverse partners and innovative collaborations

BILSY’s activities in the non-formal education sector are organised around four main sub-projects – Alternative Youth Work, Together We Stand, Sport for Development and Creative Time – as well as some special initiatives, such as a Youth Summit and a Dialogue for Social Cohesion. These are described in detail in the chapters which follow.

To implement these measures GIZ has worked in close collaboration with a range of partner institutions, including municipal governments and local and international non-governmental organisations with long-standing expertise in intercultural education, conflict resolution and social cohesion. Among these are the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM), Conflictus, GAP Youth Association, the German Olympic Sports Confederation, the Turkish Olympic Committee, the Syrian Sports Commission, the Goethe Institute and MUDEM Refugee Support Center.

With an eye towards long-term impact, BILSY has worked to strengthen the capacity of municipal officials to run intercultural projects which target both Syrian and Turkish young people, rather than simply one group or the other. Through formal agreements with municipal authorities in Gaziantep, Kırıkhan and Şanlıurfa, GIZ has facilitated access for its partner organisations to work in concert with local institutions – such as the Department of Migration (Gaziantep), the Youth and Sports Department (Gaziantep and Kırıkhan) and the Department of Culture (Gaziantep) – which are well-placed to reach both Syrian and Turkish children and youth. Municipal employees have been trained and directly involved in the planning and implementation of project activities, thereby gaining both the theoretical background and the practical experience needed to institutionalise such approaches in their regular work in the future. To ensure that intercultural activities can be carried out in welcoming well-equipped venues that are accessible to all, GIZ has also invested in upgrading and renovating selected community facilities as part of BILSY.

In the pages which follow we invite you to learn more about the activities BILSY has supported over the past two and half years and how these efforts are contributing to greater social cohesion between refugees and members of host communities in Turkey.



<sup>1</sup> M. Murat Erdogan, Syrians-Barometer-2017. A framework for achieving social cohesion with Syrians in Turkey. 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM). [http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/temporary-protection\\_915\\_1024\\_4748\\_icerik](http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/temporary-protection_915_1024_4748_icerik) Figures as of December 27, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> International Crisis Group (Jan 2018) Turkey’s Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions. Europe Report No 248. Brussels.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM). Figures as of December 27, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Kuhnt et al. (2017): Social cohesion in times of forced displacement – the case of young people in Jordan. University of Göttingen Courant Research Centre ‘Poverty, Equity and Growth’ Discussion Paper No. 243



## Building a new generation of youth leaders

### The Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand projects catalyse community action for social cohesion

The Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand projects empower young volunteers, or ‘multipliers’, to design and implement activities which contribute to social cohesion among Syrian refugees and members of Turkish host communities. While the activities themselves are wildly diverse – rock climbing, museum visits, painting and kick-boxing, to name a few – they all share the same objective: to bring together Syrian and Turkish children and youth in safe, fun and cooperative activities in which they get to know and trust one another.

The Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand projects don’t only benefit those who participate in the activities – they are also incredibly important for personal and professional development of the volunteers themselves. Through the two projects, young women and men have the opportunity to get directly involved in shaping civic life in their communities. They have the freedom to build on their own skills and interests – or to test out completely new ideas – when designing intercultural activities for children and young people. Through the process of planning and conducting their projects, the volunteers gain confidence in their leadership abilities and improve their facilitation skills in intercultural situations. They also gain project management experience, in areas such as organising venues and transportation, budgeting and accounting, which can be helpful when they apply for internships or jobs in the future.

In short, the Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand projects serve as a testing ground for a new generation of youth leaders – both Syrian and Turkish – to contribute to social cohesion in tangible ways. Since late 2016, 547 youth leaders have participated in the two projects, reaching nearly 33,000 children and young people with 3,680 different activities.

## Turning motivated young people into confident, well-prepared volunteers

The Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand projects are the product of an intense cooperation between GIZ and Conflictus, a training and consulting company in Istanbul which specialises in conflict resolution and peace education. Since early 2017 Conflictus has trained 22 mixed groups of Turkish and Syrian young people to become volunteers in their communities, using a curriculum originally developed by GIZ’s Competence Center ‘New Socio-Political Perspectives’ and subsequently adapted for use in Turkey. Following the training, Conflictus supports the youth leaders as they implement social cohesion projects in their communities. After the successful launch of the Alternative Youth Work project in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa, GIZ decided to extend the same approach to Ankara and Istanbul, where it is being implemented under the name Together We Stand.

The team at Conflictus works closely with local partner organisations to identify volunteer candidates, to organise and run training programme, and to follow-up on locally-implemented activities. The main local partners for Alternative Youth Work are Gaziantep Municipality and the GAP Youth Association in Şanlıurfa. In Ankara the local partner for Together We Stand is the NGO ASAM; in Istanbul, Conflictus works with the NGO MUDEM.

### A diverse group of young people

The Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand projects are built around a community of motivated, committed young people, between 18 and 30 years of age. From the outset, the aim has been to have an equal mix of women and men, Syrian and Turkish participants. This has largely been achieved, with small variations from place to place.

Participation in the projects is by application. Prior to each new round of trainings, local partner organisations spread the word through social media, community associations and NGOs, local universities and municipal authorities. Interested candidates submit online applications which are reviewed by project coordinators.

The main criteria for new volunteers is that they be motivated to engage with issues in the community, and that they are able to commit the necessary time to complete the training programme and to conduct one or more activities in the months which follow. Applicants who have volunteering or project management experience are particularly welcome, but most important is an openness to intercultural engagement and a desire to contribute to social cohesion in the community.

The pool of applicants is diverse. Many are volunteers, already active with civic associations including those which serve the Syrian community in Turkey. A large number – especially in Ankara and Istanbul – are university students in fields such as social work and child development. In some application rounds, the partner organisations specifically recruited teachers, municipal employees and volunteers from community centers in order to bring both different perspectives and new entry points to groups of Syrian and Turkish children and young people.



### The youth leadership training programme

The young people selected for participation in the projects are trained in groups of approximately 25 by a team of experienced trainers from Conflictus. The curriculum comprises six complementary modules: the role and tasks of youth leaders; children's rights and the situation of children and young people in host communities; methods for working with children and young people; conflict mediation and prevention in the context of migration; networking and communication; and project management. The training programme is carried out on three successive Saturdays or Sundays, with two modules covered per day.

Because not all Syrian participants are fully proficient in Turkish, the trainers rely heavily upon non-verbal forms of communication. To build trust between Syrian and Turkish participants they use 'active games' which require eye contact, gestures or physical contact to accomplish a task together. Drama and role-playing exercises help to bring people out of their shells by removing the language barrier and allowing thoughts, emotions and ideas to spill out in other forms. According to Elif Kalan, of Conflictus, the use of games also gives the young people an important feeling for social cohesion:

“ Social cohesion is not about one community being 'harmonised' into another community. It is about all of us. It's something mutual. And it starts here, in the training. This is why we use games that are mostly without talking. When you're in a group it doesn't matter who you are and where you're from: you have to work together and make decisions as a group using your bodies and your eyes, or using gestures. During these moments they understand somehow what social cohesion is. ”



### 3,680 activities which allow volunteers' skills and passions to shine

Within two weeks of completing the training, the young leaders prepare written proposals, including budgets of up to 5,400 Turkish Lira (875 Euros), for projects which they would like to implement over the coming three months. The young leaders have the freedom to decide for themselves what types of activities they would like to undertake. The only requirements are that the projects involve both Turkish and Syrian young people and that they contribute in a positive way to social cohesion in the community.

For many of the volunteers the projects give them the opportunity to take existing skills and to use them in a new way. For others, they provide a chance to test out an idea for the first time. The activities do not need to be 'big' or elaborate. In fact, the trainers encourage the youth leaders to focus their efforts on a group of people that they can easily reach and to pick a topic that they already know something about. The underlying rationale is that social cohesion is built slowly, through small-scale interactions between individuals.





## Youth Leader Projects



Fatma İmirgi

### *Music as a universal language*

Fatma İmirgi teaches music at a neighbourhood school on the outskirts of Gaziantep. For some time she had been noticing mounting aggression and outbreaks of physical violence between Syrian and Turkish boys at her school and wondered if she could do anything to give the children 'outlets' to channel their energy.

The Alternative Youth Work training helped her to shape her ideas into concrete projects. She designed a rhythm workshop to give the pupils the chance to re-direct their aggression using percussion instruments. She also began to host music-making sessions during lunch breaks. She knew that there were a lot of similarities between Syrian and Turkish music, and wanted give children the chance to discover this for themselves. Pupils were welcome to join as often as they wished, and many did. After three months she and a group of pupils gave a concert for the entire school community and later at a local association for orphaned children.

'We always say that our cultures are similar, but for a long time these were only words for me,' explained Fatma. 'Then when working with the children to prepare the concert, I realised that the Syrian children were humming the melodies for certain songs. They knew these songs from their own culture.'

Fatma believes that the music projects were beneficial for the school community. She notices greater patience and more acceptance of differences among the older children who participated in the rhythm workshop and music sessions. But, she cautions, new children are arriving all the time and the need for such projects continues.



Ziad Ahmad

### Looking at Gaziantep through the eyes of others

In his project Ziad Ahmad leveraged his long-standing interest in photography to bring together young Turkish and Syrian photographers in Gaziantep.

‘Language is often a barrier, and I wanted to find a way to foster communication without words,’ said Ziad. ‘My idea was to have young people use photography to convey how they see the city and what it means to them.’

Ziad used social media to find enthusiastic young Syrian and Turkish photographers of all ability levels who were keen to be part of the project. On September 21, the International Day of Peace, 12 Turkish and 16 Syrian photographers displayed their images of Gaziantep at a public exhibition in the lobby of the Gaziantep City Center.

At the start of the process Ziad wasn’t sure that his idea could succeed: Would he be able to find enough photographers? Could he secure a location for a temporary exhibit free of charge? And, even if he could, how would he convince people to come? By tapping into networks – something that is emphasised in the Alternative Youth Work training – he managed to do all these things.

‘Turkish youth came and saw how Syrians depicted their city in a beautiful way,’ recalled Ziad. ‘This opened up the door to conversation.’ He feels proud of the way the young photographers became peacebuilders through the project and how the project itself has helped to strengthen the photography community in Gaziantep.



### Ne Halepli ne Antepi: Bridging cultures in Istanbul

Most people probably haven’t given pistachios more than a passing thought. But for Subhi Moazzem and Alaa Khabbaz, the humble pistachio is the perfect symbol of the many similarities that exist between Syrian and Turkish cultures. Known as ‘Halep fistik’ (after Aleppo) in Arabic and as ‘Antep fistik’ (after Gaziantep) in Turkish, the pistachio is one of hundreds of cultural, linguistic and culinary connection points between Syrians and Turks which either go unnoticed or are underappreciated.

After being trained as multipliers through Together We Stand, the two young Syrians joined forces to organise ‘Ne Halepli ne Antepi’ (roughly: ‘No matter whether Halep or Antep, both are pistachios!’) – a series of four intercultural evenings bringing together young Syrians and Turks in Istanbul. Each evening was devoted to a different theme – language, culture, music and food – and used interactive games and activities to showcase aspects of daily life which are the same among Syrians and Turks.

‘The idea was to bring people together and to show them how many things we have in common, even if we call them by different names or use different words,’ explains Alaa. ‘Lots of people don’t realise how similar our songs, and proverbs, and traditions are.’ For him the third evening, focused on music, was the high point. A group of musicians played short excerpts from traditional songs whose melodies are known to both Syrians and Turks, despite the lyrics being different; the participants, who were divided into two mixed groups, had to guess which version of the song was being played.

‘With this project we wanted to build a bridge so that people from both cultures could come and meet one another,’ explains Subhi. ‘The idea isn’t that people should all be the same, or that anyone should change who they are. What we wanted was to create a space where people could enjoy the beauty of diversity while still being proud of and retaining their own identities.’

Subhi Moazzem and Alaa Khabbaz



### Coming together to help the planet: Recycling and social cohesion in Ankara

We might have different languages and cultural backgrounds, but we all inhabit the same planet – and it needs our help! Aysel Uzun, a university student and trained multiplier from Ankara, is increasingly concerned that children are losing their connection to nature as they are drawn ever deeper into the realm of technology. As part of Together We Stand, she decided to raise awareness among Turkish and Syrian children of the important role the environment plays in our lives – and to help them understand that all of us share a responsibility to keep it beautiful.

The children who participated in Aysel's project (Atma, Dönüştür! Dünyayı Değiştir!/Don't Throw Away, Recycle! Change The World!) learned about recycling through interactive presentations, visited a recycling center, and practiced how to recycle and upcycle through various activities such as creating musical instruments, making paper, and building new toys out of recycled materials. Not only were the activities a hit, but the children had no difficulty forming connections with one another: A high point of the week was when a child asked, 'Can I bring my friend here tomorrow? I want him to meet my new Syrian friends.'

The way Aysel sees it, learning about recycling is a good vehicle for promoting social cohesion. 'To prepare children to be the owners of their own futures in a better world, we have to educate ourselves and our children to take care of the environment,' says Aysel. 'The world belongs to all of us, regardless of religion, language or ethnicity, and we need to unite and support one other to protect it.'

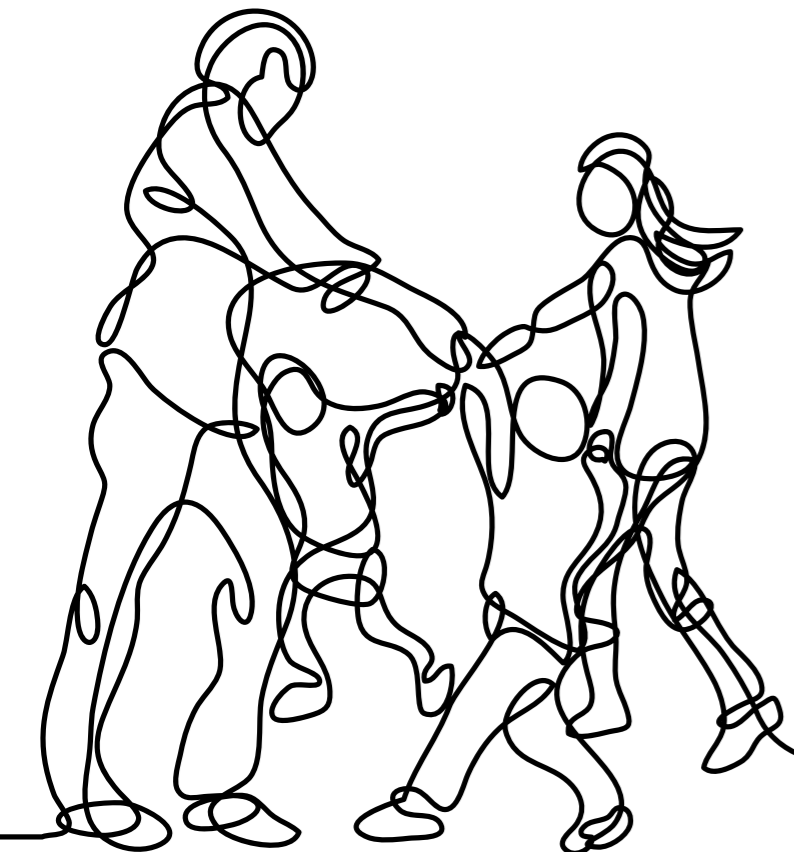


### Realising the right to play: Making toys in Şanlıurfa

Veysel Büyükkılıç is a university student from Şanlıurfa with a passion for volunteering. Over the years he's collected books for libraries, planted trees at his university, and helped to renovate schools in nearby villages. More recently, he became one of the most active volunteers in the Alternative Youth Work project, reaching 200 Syrian and Turkish children with a wide range of activities which he organised at cafes, community centers and local organisations across Şanlıurfa.

'Social Cohesion through Toys' was his favorite. He brought together 25 children between the ages of 8 and 15 and worked with them to create their own soft toys out of fabric, yarn and decorative materials. At the end of the day, each child introduced their toy to the group and came up with a name for it together. Veysel noticed that the children were more ready than many adults are to cooperate and interact. 'I was really impressed by their positive attitudes towards each other. Despite the language barrier, there was a willingness to help.'

Although Veysel was already an experienced volunteer, the Alternative Youth Work trainings gave him tools and methods for working with children and youth in a more professional way. The module on children's rights was also important. 'Through the activities I organised I tried to ensure a safe environment for the children not just to create, but also to play with their peers,' Veysel explained. 'The right to play is one of children's fundamental rights and our job as adults is to help them realise this right.'



## Sowing the seeds of social cohesion

### Thousands of quality interactions between Syrian and Turkish youth

One of the greatest achievements of the Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand projects has been the creation of spaces for face-to-face engagement between members of two communities against a backdrop of pronounced social distancing. During 2017 and 2018 nearly 33,000 children and youth came together in activities supported through the projects in the four cities, including large-scale events, such as concerts and neighbourhood actions, in Istanbul and Ankara. Some of the projects were divided into multiple sessions, giving participants the chance to have repeated interactions with one another.

While most of these projects took place in community settings, some also occurred in schools. As Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand took root, news of the approach spread via word of mouth and a growing number of school teachers applied to be trained as volunteers. The teachers were able to organise activities with school children, which helped to extend the reach of the projects beyond what was otherwise possible.

The significance of – and need for – these activities should not be underestimated. Volunteers regularly report that children are hesitant to speak with one another when they first come together. Parents are often suspicious and insist on seeing where the activities are taking place and who is involved before allowing their children to participate. In such a context it requires patience, sensitivity and creativity to shape an environment in which quality interactions can take place. The training programme provides the young volunteers with tools, methods and ideas needed to do this successfully.



### Friendships and sense of solidarity between Syrian and Turkish volunteers

Before participating in the Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand projects, many of the Syrian and Turkish young people had never had any meaningful interactions with a person from the other population group. As a result, the three-day training programme was in many cases a powerful and eye-opening experience. Turkish participants in particular developed a much better understanding of the challenges facing Syrian refugees in Turkey. This heightened awareness helped them to become more effective advocates for integration and social cohesion in their personal and professional lives.

Following each training round the Syrian and Turkish participants remained in contact with one another using social media. They would regularly exchange news, update one another on their project activities, and ask for support or advice. Friendships formed. These linkages extended far beyond the project and gradually evolved into durable social networks of like-minded ‘champions’ for peace and intercultural understanding. At times when tensions or violent incidents erupted, the youth leaders would reach out to one another, share positive messages, remind one another to stay calm and offer each other help. Through their support for one another, and their commitment to defuse rather than stoke tensions, the youth leaders showed themselves as role models for children and young people around them.

### Active, self-confident volunteers who are committed to social cohesion

The Alternative Youth Work and Together We Stand projects have activated hundreds of young volunteers to take initiative and to tackle issues in their communities. The comprehensive training curriculum has given participants the grounding they need to begin working with children and youth in intercultural settings, while the interactive methodology introduces them to techniques and exercises that they can use when running their own projects.

A strong endorsement of the approach comes from Hacettepe University, in Ankara, where students in the Faculty of Social Services must complete a final practical project before graduation. The university has agreed that the projects implemented under Together We Stand, if they are planned and executed successfully, can fulfil this requirement. A number of the trained multipliers in Ankara who are working towards the completion of their degrees at Hacettepe University have received credit for the projects they have completed.

For young people of both nationalities the opportunity to plan and execute their own projects – and to be responsible for the use of funding – is a critical learning experience. Gamze Erkmen, who coordinates Together We Stand in Ankara, on behalf of ASAM, has observed how difficult this can be:

“Some volunteers think that it’s too much and say they don’t want to continue. We explain that this project is different: it’s not about receiving something, it’s about creating something new. This is hard, especially for the Syrian volunteers. They are unsure. Many of them are hesitant to speak at first when they come to the workshops. But they manage. Some of them have now started their third projects.”

With each activity the multipliers plan and implement, their self-confidence and self-esteem grows. Önder Yalçın, the head of the Migration Department in Gaziantep, has been struck by this phenomenon:

“To be honest, I had some questions about the approach at first, because the trainings seemed to be very small. But then I saw what happened with the volunteers from the municipality who participated. After the training they developed and ran their own projects, and now they are coming constantly with proposals and ideas and asking how our department can support them. Now the impact of the approach has become clear. Participants now see that they can do things.”



## Promoting life skills and tolerance, on and off the field

### The Sport for Development approach comes to Turkey

Sports is universal. It can unite people, regardless of background or language, making it a perfect vehicle for reducing conflict, strengthening intercultural linkages and promoting social cohesion. Sports is about much more than physical health: it also promotes social interaction, respect for others and the values of fair play.

In the context of forced displacement, when large numbers of people come together as a result of circumstances beyond their control, sports and physical activity can help to mitigate conflicts, tensions, psychological distress and feelings of isolation which commonly arise. It is a particularly valuable tool for working with adolescents and youth, who are often underserved by programmes which target either children or adults, and whose specific developmental needs are not always understood<sup>6</sup>. Participation in sports can benefit young people from both refugee and host communities by promoting their well-being and social development in safe and protected spaces.

In recent years the German government has supported the 'Sport for Development' approach to address poverty and inequality, to improve people's health and wellbeing, and to link young people to education and employment opportunities in countries around the world. Coaches in a wide range of sport forms are trained to work with children and young people in ways that strengthen their self-esteem and embed values of respect, tolerance and non-discrimination. Using sport as a vehicle, these trusted role models help young people develop life skills, such as discipline, patience and perseverance, which will help them in their futures.

As part of the Education Programme for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities, the Sport for Development approach is being implemented in Gaziantep, Hatay and Şanlıurfa provinces, with a focus on intercultural education and social cohesion. GIZ's main partner in this area of the programme is the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), the non-governmental umbrella organisation for competitive, grassroots and youth sports in the country. Representing roughly 90,000 clubs and more than 27 million members, the DOSB is the largest citizen organisation in Germany. As part of the BILSY programme, the DOSB organises training courses led by international experts in a range of sports, including football, table tennis, basketball, athletics and martial arts. These courses are conducted in cooperation with local partners, including the Turkish Olympic Committee, the Syrian Sports Commission and the municipalities of Gaziantep and Kırıkhan. As part of the project GIZ also donated sports equipment, upgraded existing sports facilities and supported the construction of new sports halls in Kırıkhan and Ankara to facilitate the continuous implementation of sports-based social cohesion activities.



### Shifting the focus from performance to participation

Since December 2016, the DOSB has organised 22 different training workshops led by German-based experts in the Sport for Development approach, reaching a total of 455 coaches, physical education teachers and young people (see box for overview of workshops). Each workshop is between three and seven days long and includes a mix of Syrian and Turkish participants. In addition to teaching new skills and perspectives for using sports as a tool for social cohesion, each workshop also includes modules on project management, volunteerism and civic engagement.

'In Turkey sports is usually all about performance,' notes Mehmet Emin Bayseckin, who organises the workshops for the DOSB in Turkey. 'We're trying to introduce a new perspective: that there's also a social side to sports.' Through the training workshops coaches and physical education teachers are encouraged to use sports as a way to get young people involved in their communities and with one another. 'There's not much language needed to get onto the field and play,' says Bayseckin.

#### From A (athletics) to T (table tennis)

Athletics not only leads to improved physical fitness and health, but also contributes to social development and identity building by helping participants to enhance their self-awareness, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and recognise their own boundaries. Participation in athletics can also bring about higher levels of discipline, determination and willpower. These ideas were at the heart of three workshops on **Kids Athletics** conducted by Ralph Mouchbahani, a highly-experienced athletics coach and consultant, with 59 physical education teachers, coaches and young people in Gaziantep, Kırıkhan and Şanlıurfa. The workshops also aimed to raise awareness of environmental issues by showing how waste products can be 'upcycled' as part of athletics parcours.

Playing basketball helps people to improve the skills needed to accurately read one's surroundings, to scan the environment, to see details within the big picture, and to make accurate risk assessments. Basketball also leads to positive self and group identity and a higher degree of social confidence. Led by Aleksandar Božić, Matthias Schwendemann, Zouher Haddad and Müge Bahadır, **Basketball4Life** workshops were conducted twice in Gaziantep and once in Kırıkhan with 76 Syrian and Turkish participants. In addition to covering technical skills and physical fitness, the trainings focused on the role of the coach, how to work effectively with children and young people, and how to promote discipline and self confidence among players.



<sup>6</sup> Sport for Protection Toolkit: Programming with Young People in Forced Displacement Settings. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Terre des hommes organisation (Tdh). 2018.

The **Football for All** course further qualifies coaches to use sports as a tool for developing social skills in young people. Led by Sascha Bauer, a German football coach and coaching instructor, the workshop blends theoretical and practical sessions to help coaches guide young people to deal with emotions, to build self-confidence, to set goals and to identify steps to reach them. Empathy, communication and respect for diversity are core concepts. Eighty-seven young people took part in Football for All workshops in Gaziantep and Kırıkhan, and three young people in Gaziantep were additionally trained as trainers in the approach.



The **Football for Social Inclusion** workshop, which was conducted twice in Gaziantep (including participants invited from Şanlıurfa) and once in Kırıkhan, focuses on empowering women and girls through sport. Seventy-one Syrian and Turkish women participated, including physical education teachers, coaches, sports students, and girls and women working with sports in the context of migration. Led by Monika Staab, a former German national player and manager, the workshop used both theoretical and practical sessions to introduce participants to the role of the coach, coordination, agility, nutrition, gender equality, communication and life skills.



Martial arts foster discipline, enhance self-control, and strengthen participants' ability to manage conflict. Forty-one children and young people from Gaziantep took part in two **Martial Arts for Social Cohesion** workshops on karate and taekwondo, facilitated by DOSB experts Natalia Grybos and Martin Minarik respectively. In addition to teaching self-defence, the courses focused on using martial arts to increase tolerance and to recognise and appreciate others. Thirteen girls from Gaziantep took part in a **Self-Defense for Women** workshop, facilitated by local expert Ömer Tibik, and 24 capoeiristas from Gaziantep, Kaharammahras and Şanlıurfa deepened their skills in a **Capoeira for Social Cohesion** workshop facilitated by Marwan Ali Ghunaim.



People of all ages and abilities can enjoy table tennis, the world's most popular racket sport. Ahmed Dawlatly, an Egyptian-born technical expert with the International Table Tennis Federation, ran three workshops entitled **Breaking down Barriers with Table Tennis Balls** in Gaziantep, Kırıkhan and Şanlıurfa. Fifty-eight participants improved their table tennis skills and learned how to teach others about the importance of ethics, teamwork and values through sport.



## Turning 'Syrians' and 'Turks' into teammates

Following the workshops, the trained multipliers begin to run their own sports-based activities for children and young people, in cooperation with partner organisations or at public venues in their communities. While some organise stand-alone sports activities for different groups of participants, other multipliers conduct regular training sessions with a fixed group of children and young people. As of November 2018, approximately 8,500 Syrian and Turkish children and young people in Gaziantep, Kırıkhan and Şanlıurfa had taken part in sports activities as part of the programme.

Regular participation in team sports is particularly effective in building young people's mental, social and emotional well-being. A core group of active multipliers has emerged who continue to lead sports activities with specific groups of children. In Kırıkhan, approximately 10 coaches and sports teachers work on a regular basis with nearly 600 children and young people, organising athletics, basketball, football, karate and table tennis sessions. In Gaziantep 24 multipliers regularly run training sessions with about 525 children in badminton, basketball, football, martial arts and volleyball. It is in these team settings that contributions to social cohesion are particularly notable: through regular and repeated contact with one another over a period of time, children are able to move beyond their initial prejudices and to see one another as teammates, rather than as 'Syrian' or 'Turkish'.



## Learning to play – and live – together

For close to a year now, a group of 10 Syrian and 10 Turkish boys have been meeting every Saturday morning at the Olympic Football Court in Gaziantep. By their sides are Feras Akdağ and Barış Özalkan, who met during one of the Football for All workshops and decided to coach a mixed Syrian-Turkish team together.

Feras and Barış both found Football for All transformational and are trying to incorporate elements of the approach into their weekly sessions. 'This course helped me understand that sports isn't just about fitness, it's about life,' said Feras, who used to referee football matches in Syria before he came to Turkey. Using tools they learned at the workshop, he and Barış have divided training sessions into social parts, where they use games and exercises to build relationships between the children, and technical ones, focused on specific skills.

Building a team takes time. According to Barış, there was plenty of fighting during the early days. Each side harboured prejudice against the other, and communication wasn't easy. But as time passed, trust and acceptance grew. After six months the boys had integrated and began to see themselves as a single team. 'Now if the Turkish boys start fighting with one another, the Syrians break it up,' he said with a smile.

Positive role models can make huge contributions to social cohesion, and when role models from two different communities join forces, the results are doubly powerful. Through their steadiness, commitment and empathy, Feras and Barış have shown what it looks like to take a challenging situation and create something better in its place.



## Farther, higher, faster: Sports for social cohesion takes off

### Sports-based social cohesion activities in schools in Gaziantep

As part of the BILSY programme, GIZ reached an agreement with the Gaziantep Municipality to support the implementation of sports-based social cohesion activities for school children in the fields of basketball, football, athletics, volleyball, taekwondo, table tennis, swimming and wrestling. Using sports equipment provided by GIZ, volunteers from the municipality organised one-day sports festivals for children between the ages of 7 and 14 at 40 different schools. Approximately 13% of the 52,000 children who participated were Syrian. In addition, more intense training opportunities were organised in the form of summer and winter sports schools.

### Engaging adolescents from vulnerable neighbourhoods in Ankara

After focusing on southeastern Turkey during the first two years of the programme, BILSY extended its support for sports activities to Ankara upon the request of the National Ministry of Youth and Sports. There, 350 young people between the ages of 8 and 18, including adolescents with disabilities, have been playing basketball, football, taekwondo and tennis under the guidance of professional coaches. In addition to the trainings, the 'Strengthening Social Cohesion through Sports amongst the Refugees and Host Youngsters in Ankara' project also includes awareness raising sessions on health, nutrition and migration for the young people's families. The project is implemented by the Yenimahalle Tennis Club in partnership with the Yildirim Beyazit University; the National Ministry of Youth and Sports provides coaches, access to facilities and youth camps.

### Investing in sports in Kırıkhan

In the city of Kırıkhan, where nearly every third resident is Syrian, the demand for regular, well-structured intercultural activities is enormous. Between September 2017 and October 2018, more than 120 Syrian and Turkish coaches, physical education teachers and young people were trained as multipliers through the Sport for Development approach. They subsequently organised karate, football, table tennis and athletics sessions for nearly 600 children and young people. Together, these Syrian and Turkish youth took part in sports activities more than 2000 times. In addition, 2500 school children aged 9-12 have participated in educational programmes organised by the Turkish Olympic Committee.

Mr Ayhan Yavuz, the mayor of Kırıkhan, has been a strong supporter of the project: 'Our message to the world is that sport brings people together and improves their sense of belonging.' As one concrete example, Mr. Yavuz drew attention to the fact that a Syrian representing Kırıkhan recently became the Turkish national karate champion. 'I am grateful for this cooperation with GIZ and thank everyone who has contributed to this project.'

As part of the cooperation with the municipality of Kırıkhan, GIZ supported the construction of a new sports hall which will be used to host sports-based activities for mixed groups of children and young people. Scheduled for completion in March 2019, the hall will be opened with an Olympic Day and Sports Festival to which members of the public will be invited.



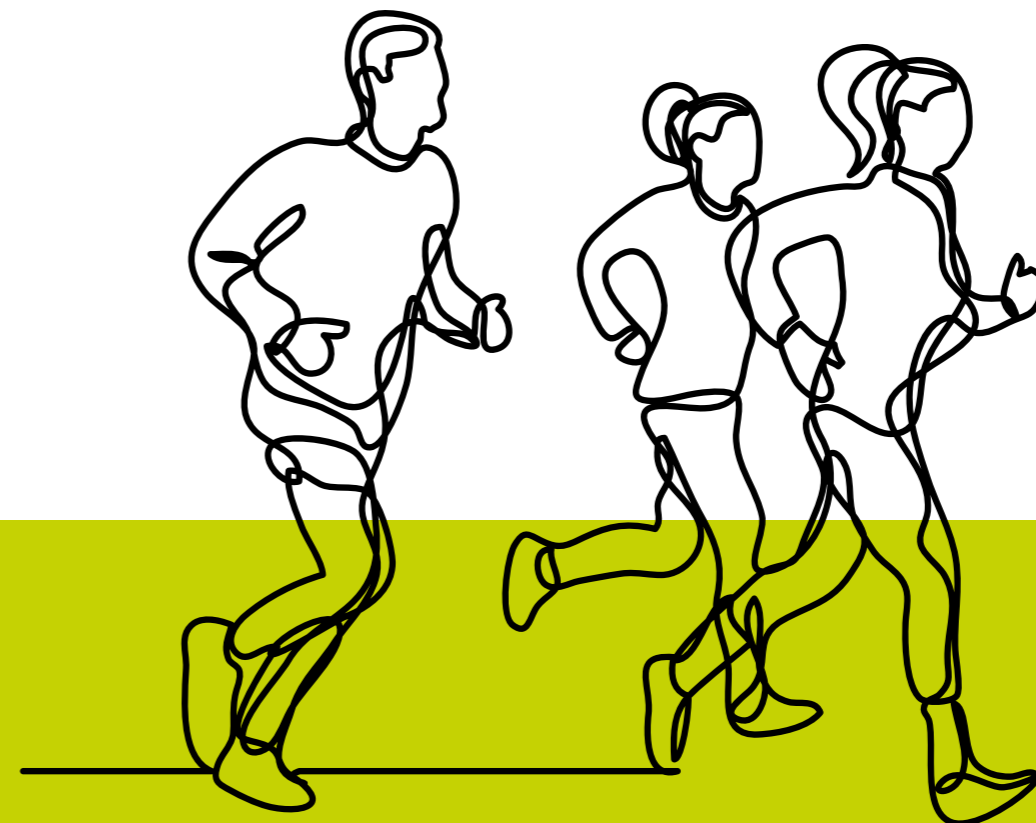
## Lasting benefits for communities

The Sports for Development approach implemented as part of the BILSY programme has generated lasting benefits not only for the individual participants, but also for communities as a whole. Sports and exercise have proven to be effective entry points for organising community-wide events to mark special days such as the International Day for Sport Development and Peace (April 6), Children's Day (October) and Day of the Girl Child (October 11).

Thousands of children and young people have had the opportunity to participate in well-organised, professionally-led sports activities which not only improve their physical and mental health, but also bring them into direct contact with young people from other backgrounds. Through sports they have learned important values – including taking responsibility for one's actions, respecting others and openness to new ideas – which can enhance their future prospects and their employability.

The trained Syrian and Turkish multipliers have also had their horizons broadened. Coaches and sports teachers who used to be narrowly focused on sports now have a new understanding of their social role in the community. Many continue to volunteer actively in their communities, becoming ambassadors for social cohesion in the field of sports. In addition, through the programme many Syrian and Turkish multipliers have built connections with one another, some of which continue off the playing field.

When sports activities are designed to encourage participation, not competition, they are the perfect vehicle for integrating newcomers to a community. And as a result of this integration, the community as a whole benefits. Sports allows everyone – regardless of how long they have lived in a place – to support the 'home team.' It strengthens the sense of community and a feeling of belonging.



# Fostering self-expression through arts, science and culture

## Discovering and learning together at Creative Time workshops

Exploring. Testing out new ideas. Working together to solve problems. The workshops organised under the Creative Time project use the arts, science and culture as entry points for bringing children and young people from different backgrounds together in a wide range of intercultural activities.

Implemented by the Goethe Institute, Creative Time trains municipal employees, social workers and youth volunteers in Gaziantep and Mardin to run activities in the areas of social circus, breakdance, photography, science, creative reading, and philosophy for children. By February 2019, Creative Time had reached roughly 6,500 people in the two cities through 85 different activities including big events.

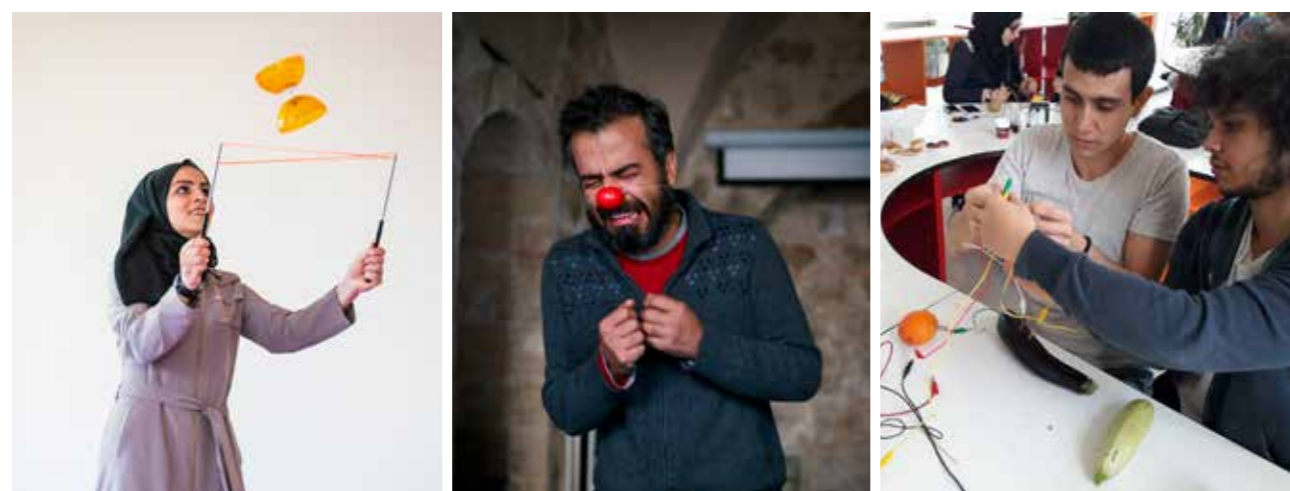
While the individual workshops are different in focus, they share a single logic: whether it is building a human pyramid, taking measurements during an experiment, adjusting camera settings or testing out new breakdance moves, the participants in Creative Time activities get close, engage one another, and figure out together how to get better at whatever it is they are learning to do. In the process, they improve their social skills, learn to listen to and respect others, and build confidence in their capabilities.

### Applying a proven approach

As the politically independent cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Goethe Institute runs cultural programmes around the world which encourage intercultural dialogue and enable cultural involvement. In Turkey the Goethe Institute has a long history of conducting cultural activities which bring members of different communities, including disadvantaged ones, together. In 2014 it started working with Syrian refugees and host communities. In 2017 GIZ joined forces with the Goethe Institute to apply some of its proven approaches from the cultural field in support of social cohesion between Syrian refugees and host communities in Gaziantep and Mardin.

The Goethe Institute uses a cascade model to engage large numbers of participants and audience members in creative activities. From its network of partner organisations, in both Germany and Turkey, the Institute invites cultural experts and artists to train social workers, volunteers and municipal employees how to work with young refugees and members of host communities, using specific methods, e.g. breakdance or photography. In Gaziantep, it has trained employees from the Department of Museums and Libraries and from Gasmek, a municipal institution which offers continuing education and training courses; in Mardin it has trained staff from the Mardin Museum and Her Yerde Sanat (“Art Anywhere”).

These trained individuals, who are known as ‘team leaders,’ then build a four-person team, made up of both Syrians and Turks, and teach them the basics of the approach. Working with municipal authorities, the teams then organise a series of workshops for children and young people in municipal facilities.



Each programme ends with a public activity, such as a social circus festival or science show, to which members of the public are invited. The young people put on performances, run mini-workshops and demonstrate through their creative collaborations what social cohesion can look like.

### Social circus: much more than just fun and games

What do juggling, walking on stilts and building human pyramids have to do with social cohesion? Quite a lot, it turns out, when these are used as part of the social circus methodology. Social circus uses circus arts – which also include balancing, clowning and acrobatics – as alternative pedagogical tools for engaging young people who are marginalised, have experienced trauma, or are facing some type of personal risk.

Using humor and playfulness, social circus builds participants’ self-esteem, independence and sense of solidarity with others. It helps them to re-evaluate their perceptions of trust towards others and to develop courage and self-confidence in social situations.

As part of the Creative Time project, the Goethe Institute cooperated with Her Yerde Sanat (“Art Anywhere”) in Mardin to involve young Syrian refugees and Turkish children and youth in social circus workshops. The participants have had the opportunity to share their new skills in public performances, including at the 2017 Children’s Festival and 2018 Social Circus Festival in Gaziantep.

## Opportunities to try out something new, with new people

Like the other BILSY projects, Creative Time provides spaces and opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to come together around a shared purpose. Activities such as breakdance and social circus are relative novelties in Gaziantep and Mardin, and as a result, plenty of young people are keen to try them out. But it takes time, effort and a deliberate approach to create an environment in which Syrian and Turkish children and young people feel comfortable together.

The Creative Time project coordinators regularly observe that at workshops the initial contact between members of the two groups is strained. ‘It isn’t easy at first. There are a lot of prejudices and neither side likes the idea of contact,’ says Tijen Togay, of the Goethe Institute. ‘But we don’t force things. We give them time and let them observe what’s going on. Gradually you see that the activities help to break the ice.’ As the workshops proceed and the participants get more deeply involved, the underlying logic becomes clear to all: we don’t have to be the same to enjoy doing things together. The creative activities at the heart of the workshops offer everyone a chance to learn and grow.





## Creating welcoming spaces for people to meet and engage

### The rehabilitation of community facilities benefits everyone

BILSY not only kick-started a wave of intercultural activities for Syrian and Turkish children and youth, but it also supported the renovation or construction of facilities in which these activities take place. This has included upgrades to community centers, parks and libraries in Gaziantep which serve as gathering points for children, young people and families from both communities, and the construction of brand new sports facilities in Ankara and Kırıkhan.

In Gaziantep, for instance, the rehabilitation of two **community centers** and two **parks/campgrounds** has virtually doubled the number of people who can use the facilities. Additional meeting rooms, kitchens and pavilions have been added, while new tables, chairs and shelving give the facilities a fresher, more welcoming feel. Önder Yalçın, the head of Gaziantep's Migration Department, pointed out that many community centers are located in traditionally disadvantaged areas of the city. Upgrading the facilities in these centers benefits long-time residents of the neighbourhood as much as it benefits more recently-arrived Syrians. 'Once you've established an inviting atmosphere, people come. Families come. The kids start to mix, the women cook together in the kitchen. People come together to talk and dance. Now they say that the space isn't big enough!'

The **Gizem Dogan Park**, on the outskirts of Gaziantep, has been providing opportunities for young people, especially those who are socially or economically marginalised, to participate in life skills-oriented sports and adventure programmes since 2011. It also plays host to many different BILSY activities. In 2016, to expand the park's capacity to host mixed groups of Syrian and Turkish children and youth, GIZ completely renewed an ageing set of four-person bungalows, built a camping area with a huge yurt for activities and trainings, expanded the dining hall, and constructed a swimming pool. As a result of these investments in park facilities, 12,000 young people were able to take part in single- and multi-day programmes in 2017, up from 8,000 the year before. Moreover, the management of the park was able to conclude an agreement with the Ministry of Education to host a greater number of mixed Syrian and Turkish school groups in its sports and adventure facilities. 'More space and improved facilities are better for everyone,' says Barış Özalkan, the park manager. 'Now we can do more and offer way more than we could before.'

Also in Gaziantep, GIZ has helped the Department of Libraries and Museums to establish a first-of-its-kind **Digital Library** where groups of Syrian and Turkish youth can participate in educational and creative workshops using technology. The three-room media lab is equipped with computers, printers (including 3D printers), televisions and a digital archive of e-books and other online resources. Hüseyin Ateş, the head of the department, is excited about the possibilities: 'The world is changing and we have to keep up: today young people need to be able to access electronic materials. And for the first time we now have a public space where they can do this, together with their peers.'



## Celebrating youth and volunteerism as a shared identity

### Youth Summit brings together 200 volunteers to learn, share and network

For three days in early September 2018, Erikçe Park, on the outskirts of Gaziantep, played host to approximately 200 Syrian and Turkish youth leaders who came together from across the country to learn from one another, share experiences and deepen their understanding and practice of volunteerism. The participants were drawn from among the more than 1,000 trained volunteers involved in BILSY-supported projects in Ankara, Gaziantep, Hatay, Istanbul, Kırıkhan, Mardin and Şanlıurfa. Women and men, Syrians and Turks participated in equal numbers in this exuberant, celebratory gathering.

Organised under the theme 'Learning – Sharing – Networking,' the Youth Summit was the culmination of a two-year process in which the Syrian and Turkish youth leaders have gradually developed a shared identity as volunteers. Despite their different backgrounds, the young people who have been trained as multipliers for social cohesion have developed relationships with one another which transcend traditional markers such as religion, nationality and language. They have found common ground with others of similar age and interests, and in doing so, have helped to strengthen the fabric of their communities. The Summit was an opportunity to celebrate all that they have achieved – and to give them new tools, ideas and motivation for the future.

During the Summit, youth leaders had the chance to present their social cohesion activities to a wider audience (e.g. through poster presentations) and to learn about the activities carried out by their counterparts in other cities. They also had the opportunity to go deeper into specific topics of interest through participation in three of eight different breakout workshops. Sessions were held on child rights; drama and social cohesion; conflict resolution and negotiation; group dynamics and inter-group relations; sport for development and peace; project management; and communications, CV writing and job applications. In addition, a well-received panel discussion on the first day of the Summit gave the youth leaders the chance to hear from national and international experts on volunteering from United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the European Voluntary Service, Habitat Association and the Gaziantep Education and Development Association.

The Summit was not all work, however. Far away from the noise and bustle of the city, the Syrian and Turkish youth leaders had the chance to get to know one another and simply to have fun together. Social circus performances, martial arts demonstrations, teamwork challenges and music concerts filled the free hours. Spontaneous renditions of the 'Halay' added to the feeling of togetherness and community.



## Visioning a joint future, together

### The Dialogue for Social Cohesion explores the 'new' Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa

Through their volunteer work with Syrian and Turkish children and youth, the BILSY youth leaders have been on the front lines of efforts to strengthen social cohesion. The insights they have gained through these experiences are valuable assets to be drawn upon as communities across Turkey work to create a conducive environment for local residents and refugees to live side by side.

To ensure that young people – both Syrian and Turkish – are at the heart of discussions about the future of community life, BILSY implemented a project entitled the Dialogue for Social Cohesion. The Dialogue engaged a select group of youth leaders and community leaders in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa in visioning a shared, positive future for Syrian refugees and host communities in the two cities.

The Dialogue is based on an established method, developed by the GIZ Sector Programme Gender Equality and Women's Rights and implemented in numerous countries around the world, which promotes listening, appreciation and respect as a way to strengthen understanding and relations between people of different ages, genders, beliefs, or ethnic backgrounds.

#### In-depth conversations about the present and the future

As the name suggests, the Dialogue for Social Cohesion is built around a series of conversations. Cross-national pairs of youth leaders – 13 in Gaziantep and 13 in Şanlıurfa – identified and interviewed an older Syrian or Turkish community leader to explore what they value about the 'new' Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa and how they hope to see the cities evolve in the coming years to be peaceful, fulfilling places for all their inhabitants to live. Through the interviews the young people found out what has inspired them to become leaders; how they see their role in building the new Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa; and what their hopes are for the future, including for the cities' young residents. The interviews reflected the essence of the Dialogue approach, which is to focus on the best of what is; to open up spaces for imagining what can be; and, by doing this, to help shape what will be.

#### Joint reflection and visioning

After each interview, the Syrian and Turkish pair jointly reflected on what they heard; how it related to their own beliefs, values and experiences; and how it shaped their visions for the future. As part of this process, they identified excerpts of the conversations which were particularly inspiring or meaningful to them. Once all the interviews were conducted, the youth leaders came together again as a group to share and discuss the insights gleaned from the conversations with community leaders, to identify the common values and shared interests between the two communities which emerged from the interviews, to develop their own vision for Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa, and to reflect on the kind of support they would need from the leaders to move towards it. These ideas were presented to the community leaders at a Leadership Laboratory, held in February 2019.



#### Sharing positive testimonies

To spread the spirit of the Dialogue, highlights from the interviews, along with photographs of the youth and community leaders, were uploaded to a website ([www.peopleindialogue.com](http://www.peopleindialogue.com)). The positive testimonies and visions were heavily shared through social media networks in the two cities and beyond. A public exhibition of the photographs and participant quotes was also organised.

With its strong focus on positive appreciation, the Dialogue for Social Cohesion fostered participants' self-confidence and sense of agency, encouraged them to form new partnerships on the basis of common interests, and inspired them to help build the kind of future they would like to be part of.

#### 'They show us how valuable it is to be together'

The Dialogue for Social Cohesion made it possible to forge powerful connections between younger and older leaders, across the boundaries of nationality. Professor Hasan Esici, of Hasan Kalyoncu University in Gaziantep posted about the interview on his Instagram feed: 'Today I met with some bright, dynamic, hardworking and hopeful young people who are willing to shoulder the heavy burden of humanity. They know what they are doing and why. One was born in Raqqa, one in Aleppo, and one in Gaziantep. They're trying to put back together the world that the older generation has broken apart. I don't know exactly how they'll do it, but in today's conditions they are coming together for social cohesion and are working on living together. They show us how valuable it is to be together, to be united, to have solidarity.'



hasan.esici Bugün yüreği pırıl pırıl, dinamik, çalışkan ve bir o kadar umutlu gençlerle birliktedik. Onlar insanlığın ağır yükünü omuzlamayı göze almış, ne yaptığını ve niçin yaptığını bilen gençler. Biri Rakka'da, biri Halep'te biri Gaziantep'te dünyaya gelmiş. Büyüklelerin bozduğu dünyayı yaşanabilir bir hale getirmeye çalışıyorlar. Bu işi başaracaklarını ben de bilmiyorum kendileri de. Ama bu günün şartlarında sosyal uyum için bir araya gelmiş olmaları ve birlikte yaşamak için mücadele vermeleri en büyük başarılarıdır. Bir arada olmanın, bir olmanın, dayanışmanın ne kadar değerli olduğunu bize yaptıkları projeler ile gösteriyorlar. Çalışmalarınızda başarılar diliyorum gençler. Yolumuz açık olsun 😊  
ahmad\_ajabri\_ph Teşekkürler hocam ... sizden öğrendiklerimiz bizim için çok özel kalacaktır ❤️



## Growing together

In the course of just two and half years, the Education Programme for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities has qualified more than 1,000 Syrian and Turkish young people as volunteers and enabled them to strengthen social cohesion in their communities through the organisation of a wide range of social cohesion activities. By February 2019, BILSY had reached 108,000 Syrian and Turkish children and youth.

Given the scale of the challenge, the activities supported through this programme represent but a small contribution to the overall effort to strengthen social cohesion between Syrian refugees and Turkish host communities. At the same time, there are important lessons to be learned from the experiences gained through the programme – lessons which can, and should, be applied to similar initiatives in the future.

### Equal participation, face-to-face interactions and finding commonalities amidst difference

First is the importance of **equal participation between Syrian and Turkish young people**, both as volunteers and participants in intercultural activities. BILSY deliberately abandoned the prevailing model of organising separate activities to ‘integrate’ Syrians into host communities and instead forged new ways of engaging Syrian and Turkish young people on equal footing in joint activities. The overall approach was guided by a belief that social cohesion is not about merging one community into another, but rather about creating conditions in which people from different backgrounds respect and appreciate one another’s role in a shared community life.

Another core learning is how powerful **direct, face-to-face interactions between Syrians and members of host communities** can be. Prejudice and stereotypes flourish in the absence of actual interaction: negative attitudes towards Syrian refugees tend to be harboured by those who live at the furthest remove and have the least opportunity for engagement. Providing opportunities for people to meet and interact around shared interests is one of the most effective ways to undermine negative (social) media portrayals, because it allows commonalities to come to the forefront.

A common thread woven across all the intercultural activities supported by the programme is that **people don’t need to be the same to enjoy doing things together**. After their initial hesitation wore off, participants embraced activities built around ‘universals’, such as sports, dance, arts, music, and games. Both multipliers and participants discovered that the positive feeling they get, when doing something with others who are also enjoying themselves, handily trumps barriers of language, culture and background. This realisation is a key stepping stone to learning to live with diversity.



### A programme model which links people, training, resources and institutions

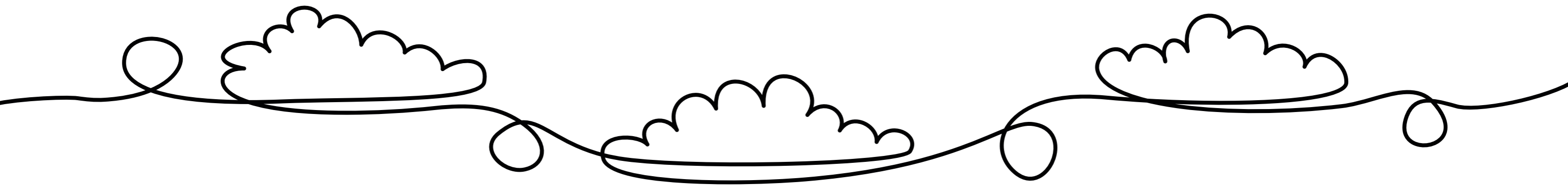
BILSY’s implementation model was built around several mutually reinforcing elements which, together, have allowed the programme to make meaningful contributions to social cohesion in the participating communities. Each of BILSY’s sub-projects identified motivated young people, trained them in their new role as multipliers for social cohesion, and provided them with resources and continuous support to implement intercultural activities. At the same time, the programme built partnerships with municipal institutions: training their staff as multipliers, providing guidance on how to organise intercultural activities, and supporting the rehabilitation of facilities and public spaces to allow more people to be reached by social cohesion activities.

Linking together trained young people with resources, networks, and public institutions turned out to be a winning formula, and may be the key to anchoring social cohesion approaches in the community. Önder Yalçın, the head of Gaziantep’s Migration Department, describes it this way: ‘All of this is very new for public officials and we are very lucky to have worked with GIZ. Through this cooperation we have received comprehensive support. The trainings are providing our staff with expertise about how to work with children and youth. But there’s also a budget which allows them to put this expertise to use.’ Cooperation between youth volunteers and municipal institutions is a win-win proposition: the young people bring ideas, energy and access to diverse groups of participants, while the municipalities offer well-situated public venues and can officially endorse and promote activities.

### Building bridges to each other – and to the future

In the end, perhaps the greatest achievement of the BILSY programme is that it has given rise to a new cadre of young leaders who see themselves as role models in their communities. These young people are multipliers not only in terms of the intercultural activities they have organised, but also in terms of the values they espouse: tolerance, open-mindedness and mutual understanding. The skills and self-confidence they have gained through their volunteer activities have positioned them to act as peacemakers and problem-solvers in their own communities – and in relation to other communities. This new generation of bridge builders is shouldering a heavy burden, but its members are joined together by a shared sense of solidarity. As one youth leader put it: ‘Before this programme, I was feeling alone in what I was doing. I wondered if my efforts were empty. Now I know I’m not alone. And I feel stronger.’





**Published by:**

Deutsche Gesellschaft für  
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

**Registered offices**

Bonn and Eschborn

Aziziye Mahallesi, Pak Sok. 1/101  
06680, Çankaya Ankara  
T +90 312 466 70 80  
F +90 312 467 72 75

E [giz-tuerkei@giz.de](mailto:giz-tuerkei@giz.de)  
I [www.giz.de/turkey](http://www.giz.de/turkey)

**Responsible:**

Joachim Scheurer, BILSY Project Director

**Publication coordinated by:**

Jasmin Dirinpur, component head, non-formal education

**Author:**

Karen Birdsall

**Design:**

Duygu Ulutas, dwt mandalina

**Photo credits:**

Cover: Zakaria Mesto; Enis Yücel (p.11, p.31, p.37 right); Ünal Turakoğlu (p.33, p.37 left);  
Zakaria Mesto (p.11); Mohammad Mesto (p.15); German Olympic Sports Confederation  
(p.25; p.27); Turkish Olympic Committee (p.28); Ahmad Al Jabri (p. 35); other photos ©GIZ Turkey

GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

**Printing and distribution:**

Yeşim Copy, Gaziantep

Ankara, March 2019

**On behalf of the**

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)