



EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye

Priority Area Brief

Education

June 2026

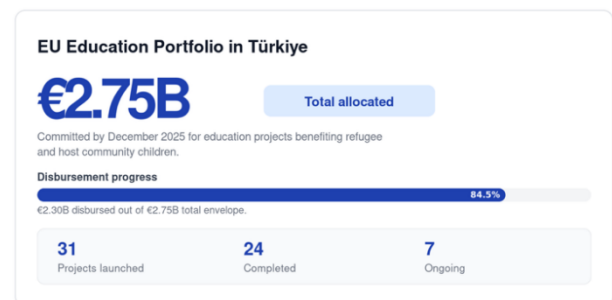
Following the change of government in Syria on December 8, 2024, there was a noticeable improvement in the country's security situation. This shift led many Syrian refugees living abroad, particularly in Türkiye, to reconsider returning to their homeland. In response to this development, the Government of Türkiye (GoT) introduced a range of policies designed to support the return process, ensuring that it was voluntary, safe, dignified, and well-organized. One key initiative was the authorization of "go-and-see" visits during the first half of 2025 which concluded by the end of June 2025. These visits allowed Syrian refugees to travel temporarily to their hometowns in Syria, giving them the opportunity to evaluate the living conditions and safety firsthand before making a decision about permanent return. As a result of these efforts, by early April 2026, more than 600,000 Syrian refugees had made the journey back from Türkiye to Syria, reflecting the impact of both improved security and supportive return measures.

Although voluntary returns to Syria are ongoing, the rate at which refugees are choosing to go back remains slower than originally anticipated. As a result, Türkiye continues to be home to one of the world's largest refugee populations. This includes approximately 2.3 million Syrians under Temporary Protection, as well as around 160,000 asylum seekers from various other countries. Given these significant numbers, there remains a strong need for Türkiye to maintain and provide education services to support both Syrian refugees and asylum seekers from other nationalities.

Education has been a central priority since the launch of the European Union (EU) support programme for refugees in Türkiye in 2016. Recognising the critical importance of education for both integration and long-term resilience, the EU has provided substantial

financial resources to the Government of Türkiye (GoT). This support has enabled over one million school-aged refugee children to access formal education, helping to prevent a generation of displaced children from missing out on learning opportunities. At the same time, EU funding has contributed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of education for Turkish students, ensuring that the needs of both refugee and host community children are addressed.

The initial phase of EU funding was primarily targeted at Syrian refugees, who represented the largest refugee population in the country at the time. However, as the refugee profile in Türkiye evolved, the scope of EU support expanded accordingly. Subsequent phases of funding have been designed to include refugees of all nationalities, reflecting the increasingly diverse composition of the refugee population. In addition, the EU's educational interventions have been extended to benefit children and youth in host communities, promoting social cohesion and shared opportunities. This comprehensive approach underscores the EU's commitment to inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all children residing in Türkiye.



By December 2025, the EU had allocated €2.75 billion for education projects, with €2.30 billion - nearly 84.5%



of the total - already disbursed. Of the 31 projects launched, 24 have been completed and 7 are ongoing.

Barriers to Education Participation

In 2025, economic instability and child labour remained significant obstacles to school enrolment and attendance among refugee children. Although inflation has eased compared to 2023, the cost of living remained high, with food, rent, and utilities placing considerable strain on both refugee and host community households. This is reflected in a 30.89% annual increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as of December 2025, alongside rising debt levels and a growing proportion of refugee households falling below the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB). Furthermore, education-related costs increased by 64.7% between January 2025 and January 2026¹, continuing to pose a significant challenge for refugee families. These quantitative pressures align closely with qualitative findings from the 2025 SUMAR assessment, in which families across Hatay, Şanlıurfa, and Gaziantep reported having children currently out of school as a direct result of rising transport, kindergarten and school-supply costs that the EU-funded Conditional Cash Transfer is no longer perceived to offset.

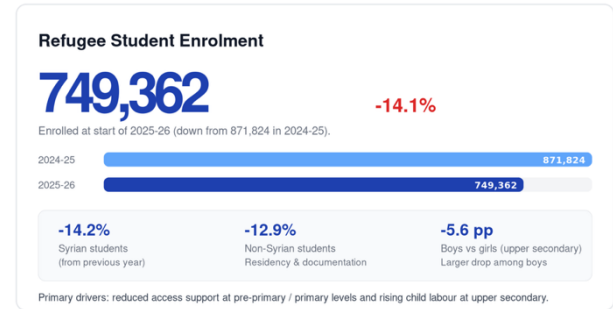
The registration process remains a significant barrier for non-Syrian refugee groups. Increasing rejection rates among International Protection applicants highlight ongoing challenges in accessing legal status. The address verification process, along with the closure of neighbourhoods with high refugee populations to new registrations, has further exacerbated issues in obtaining identification documents. These obstacles have also contributed to difficulties in school registration. The 2025 SUMAR assessment further identifies post-earthquake address-verification problems (for both Syrians and non-Syrian refugees) as a structural driver of these difficulties, particularly in earthquake-affected provinces.

The Education Support Strategy

The Education Support Strategy is designed to facilitate the integration of refugee children into Türkiye’s education system by addressing and removing barriers to educational participation and providing targeted support to schools in provinces with large refugee populations. This comprehensive strategy encompasses all levels of formal education, ranging from pre-primary to post-secondary, and includes vocational training opportunities. Central to the strategy is the provision of tailored educational, economic, and logistical support aimed at increasing enrolment and attendance rates among refugee children, while simultaneously ensuring

the delivery of quality education for both refugee and host community students. In addition, the strategy seeks to enhance the number and capacity of educational personnel and to improve educational infrastructure, particularly in areas with a high concentration of refugees, thereby creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment for all.

Education Enrolment and Completion



Recent trends indicate a notable decline in refugee student enrolment within the formal education system. At the beginning of the 2025-26 school year, the number of enrolled refugee students dropped by 14.1% compared to the start of 2024–25 school year (from 871,824 to 749,362).

The overall decrease is reflected across all education levels, with enrolment numbers falling by 43.3% in pre-primary education, 14.7% in primary education, 7.7% in lower secondary education, and 15.9% in upper secondary education. As there is a significant difference among the percentages, it is not possible to attribute the decrease only to voluntary returns to Syria, except for lower secondary education level. The substantial decline in enrolment is primarily attributable to reduced access support at the pre-primary and primary education levels, as well as a rise in child labour at the upper secondary level. Gender analysis further indicates that this decrease in upper secondary level is more pronounced among boys, who experienced a 5.6% greater drop in enrolment compared to girls.

When analysed by nationality, enrolment numbers declined by 14.2% among Syrian students and by 12.9% among non-Syrian students. The decline among non-Syrian students can be attributed to challenges related to legal residency and documentation, in addition to the factors affecting Syrian students.

Vocational education opportunities have been significantly strengthened through EU support, with a particular focus on developing vocational skills among refugee and host community children and youth aged 14 to 17. These efforts have aimed to equip young people with practical competencies that enhance their employability and support their long-term integration

¹ Turkish Institute of Statistics 2026. Consumer Price Index January 2026

into the labour market. As of December 2025, a total of 17,919 refugee and host community students had completed vocational education programmes with the assistance of EU-funded initiatives. Furthermore, at the higher education level, 1,377 refugee students successfully graduated from their programmes as a result of EU support.

Support to Education and Well-being of Refugee Students

A wide range of educational and support services have been provided to refugee and host community students through EU-funded initiatives. By 2025-Q4, a total of 341,977 refugee students received catch-up and back-up training. In 2025 quarters, an average of:

- Over 50,000 refugee students attended Turkish language courses.
- Almost 48,000 refugee students benefited from psycho-social support.
- Approximately 45,000 refugee and host community students received in-kind supports (lunch, books, stationery, educational tools and equipment, uniforms/clothing).
- Over 12,000 refugee and host community students were provided with transportation services to attend education institutions.

Economic Support for Education Participation



Picture 1: Güvercintepe Lower Secondary School, Istanbul, 2026

An important aspect of EU support is the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) programme, launched in 2017, which consists of two primary components: cash assistance and child protection.

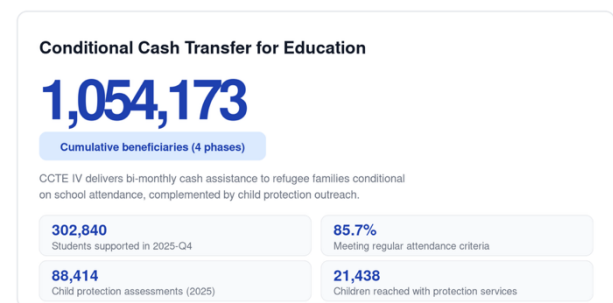
In 2025-Q4, the programme provided financial assistance to the families of 302,840 refugee students enrolled in formal education,

bringing the cumulative total to 1,054,173 beneficiaries across its four phases. Payments are issued every two months to debit cards, contingent upon the fulfilment of designated attendance criteria, and may be used for both purchases and cash withdrawals. Additionally, supplementary payments are provided at the beginning of each semester to assist with the purchase of school supplies, regardless of the students' attendance status.

The cash transfer initiative has been instrumental in promoting educational access and regular attendance among refugee children across preschool, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and distance learning, while benefiting nearly equal numbers of male and female students. As a result of the CCTE IV project's efforts, 85.7% of CCTE-supported children enrolled at the beginning of the 2024–25 school year met the regular attendance criteria by March 2025. The SUMAR monitoring mission to CCTE IV in June 2025 corroborated this strong delivery against quantitative targets and reported high beneficiary satisfaction with child-protection visits, while observing that the real value of the cash transfer has been eroded by inflation, narrowing its function as an attendance incentive for the most economically pressed families.

The Cash Transfer component is supplemented by a Child Protection element, which encompasses identification, assessment, and referral processes. Field teams from the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS) and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) actively conduct household visits to families whose children do not meet attendance requirements and facilitate referrals to other projects and agencies to address barriers preventing refugee children from participating in education.

Between January and December 2025, the CCTE IV Project conducted protection assessments for 88,414 children, of whom 17,739 were referred to specialised services for additional support. During this period, 21,438 children received protection services delivered by both MoFSS and TRC field staff.

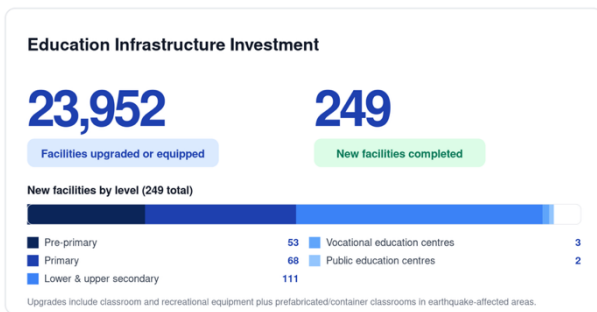


The EU has provided scholarships to 72,993 refugee and Turkish students to support their attendance at TVET and higher education institutions. By December 2025, two higher education support projects, ESPS and BEURs, had covered tuition fees and provided stipends for living and study expenses to 6,532 refugee and Turkish students. Additionally, these projects offer supplementary activities, including academic and language support, career counselling, and initiatives designed to promote social cohesion between refugee and Turkish students. The SUMAR monitoring mission to BEURs in October 2025 documented strong delivery

against social-cohesion, awareness and employability outputs, with 89% of scholarship beneficiaries re-enrolling for the following academic year, while noting that GPA-based scholarship discontinuation and constrained internship opportunities for refugee students remain implementation challenges in the project's final phase.

Education Infrastructure Capacity

Extensive efforts have been undertaken to upgrade and equip educational facilities across the country, with the aim of providing improved learning environments for both refugee and host community students. To date, 23,952 educational facilities have been upgraded or equipped with essential materials. These enhancements include the supply of classroom and recreational equipment, as well as the installation of prefabricated or container classrooms for special education, preschool, and general education, particularly in regions where schools were damaged or destroyed by the 2023 earthquake.



Significant investments have been made in educational infrastructure to support refugee and host communities, with €641 million allocated by the EU. EU-funded projects have led to the completion of 249 new solid-structure or prefabricated educational facilities in provinces with high concentrations of refugees. These include 53 facilities for pre-primary education, 68 for primary education, 111 for lower and upper secondary education, three vocational education centres, and two public education centres.

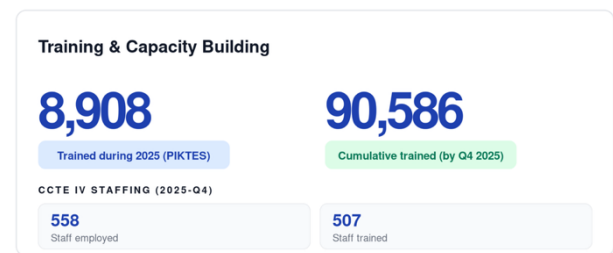
Staffing Levels and Quality


PIKTES IV has made significant contributions to enhancing educational quality and safety for refugee

students and school communities. In 2025-Q4, the project financed the salaries of 8,409 teachers, school security personnel, and cleaning staff. This support aimed to enhance Turkish language proficiency among refugee students, thereby facilitating their ability to engage with other curricular subjects, while also ensuring that schools provide a safe and clean environment for all students and staff. The SUMAR monitoring mission to PIKTES IV in February 2026 documented steady delivery on Turkish-language and academic support, with parents and school staff reporting improvements in refugee children's classroom engagement, while noting that proposed policy and institutional measures intended to sustain refugee enrolment beyond the project's lifetime remain at the planning stage.



PIKTES projects have also prioritised capacity building through training initiatives. Between January and December 2025, a total of 8,908 teachers, school administrators, school counsellors, and other MoNE personnel were trained to better support refugee and Turkish students, bringing the cumulative number of trained staff to 90,586 by 2025-Q4. Additionally, under the CCTE IV project, 558 staff members were employed at both central and provincial levels, and 507 staff received training in 2025-Q4.



<p>This document has been prepared with the support of:</p>  <p>Technical Assistance to Monitor the Performance of EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye</p> <p>This project is implemented by the consortium lead by GOPA</p> <p>© 2026 European Commission</p>	<p>The EU support to refugees in Türkiye is a programme financed by the European Union which supports the Government of Türkiye to manage the challenges presented by the influx of refugees from neighbouring countries (over 90% of whom are from Syria) since 2011. To date, the EU has allocated over EUR 12 billion to support 180+ projects covering a wide range of sectors.</p> <p>This Brief has been prepared by SUMAR which provides monitoring and reporting services to the EU relating to the refugee support programme. For more information go to: EU support to partner countries on migration and forced displacement - European Commission.</p>
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