



EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye

Priority Area Brief

Municipal Infrastructure

June 2026

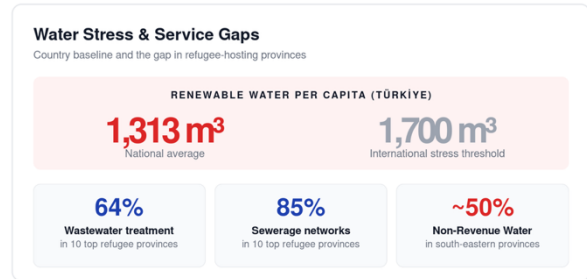
Türkiye continues to host one of the world's largest refugee populations, with approximately 2.3 million Syrians under temporary protection as of April 2026¹. Following the political transition in Syria in December 2024, voluntary returns accelerated, and 607,886 Syrian nationals had returned to Syria by early April 2026. The majority of refugees in Türkiye reside in the southern and south-eastern provinces and in major metropolitan centres such as İstanbul, Bursa, İzmir, and Konya. The ten provinces with the highest refugee population ratios are: Kilis (23.02%), Gaziantep (12.67%), Hatay (8.13%), Şanlıurfa (7.85%), Adana (7.10%), Mersin (6.91%), Kahramanmaraş (4.65%), Mardin (4.61%), Osmaniye (4.27%), and Konya (4.10%)¹. Municipalities in these provinces face significant pressure on their basic service delivery systems, and several of them were also among the areas most heavily impacted by the February 2023 earthquakes.

The February 2023 earthquakes, which severely impacted 11 provinces across south-eastern Türkiye, continue to shape the operational environment for municipal infrastructure delivery. The Türkiye Earthquakes Recovery and Reconstruction Assessment (TERRA) estimated the damage to municipal infrastructure and services at USD 302 million.² Qualitative findings from the 2025 SUMAR Provincial Effectiveness Assessment (PEA) echo this picture: residents in Hatay describe families displaced from heavily damaged areas continuing to migrate towards less-affected districts, increasing demand on housing and municipal services and prompting noticeable strain on routine maintenance, even as

participants acknowledge gradual improvements in service delivery over the past two years.

Beyond the direct damage, the earthquakes have placed sustained pressure on labour and material availability and concentrated institutional focus on reconstruction in the affected provinces, contributing to implementation delays across the portfolio - although EU refugee programme-funded assets themselves remained intact and operational.

Why municipal systems remain under pressure



Türkiye is classified as a water-stressed country, with annual per-capita renewable water resources standing at approximately 1,313 m³ - well below the international threshold of 1,700 m³ that defines water stress^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. Population growth, urbanisation and the effects of climate change continue to place increasing pressure on water resources, and the situation is further amplified in refugee-hosting provinces, where municipal water and wastewater systems must serve significantly larger populations than originally designed for.

Despite progress at the national level, wastewater treatment and sewerage coverage in the ten provinces

¹ Presidency of Migration Management
<https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27>

² Türkiye Earthquakes Recovery and Reconstruction Assessment. Strategy and

Budget Directorate of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye
<https://www.sbb.gov.tr/turkiye-earthquakes-recovery-and-reconstruction-assessment/#>



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hosting the largest refugee populations³ remains below the Türkiye-wide average. As of 2022, an estimated 64% of the municipal population in these provinces was served by wastewater treatment plants, and 85% by sewerage networks⁴. These figures reflect both the scale of the infrastructure gap and the additional demand placed on local systems by the refugee population, which has driven sustained EU investment in this area.



Solid waste management remains a sector with significant infrastructure gaps. Of the 32.3 million tonnes of municipal waste collected in Türkiye in 2024, 88.9% was sent to waste-processing facilities while 10.9% was still sent to municipal dumpsites⁵, reflecting the continued need for investment in modern landfill, recovery and treatment infrastructure - particularly in refugee-hosting provinces, where additional waste volumes place further strain on existing systems.

While 99% of urban residents reportedly had access to piped water, only 62% of municipalities nationwide were equipped with water treatment facilities for potable supply⁶. This figure is similar (61%) for provinces with the highest proportion of Syrian refugees⁷.

Finally, Non-Revenue Water (NRW), which indicates losses resulting from leakage and inefficiencies in distribution systems, presents a critical challenge, especially in southeastern provinces. Also affected by the 2023 earthquakes, NRW rate is around 50% in these provinces.⁸ These quantitative figures align with findings from the 2025 SUMAR PEA, in which both refugee and host community participants in Şanlıurfa reported frequent water cuts at neighbourhood level, with some areas relying on tanker deliveries to bridge supply gaps - reinforcing the case for sustained investment in network rehabilitation.

EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye Municipal Services Strategy

The EU's goal in this area is clear: to provide resilient, inclusive municipal services in refugee-hosting provinces across Türkiye.



The European Union remains the largest single contributor to the refugee response in Türkiye, having mobilised over EUR 10 billion since 2016 to support refugees and host communities. A significant share of this support has been directed at strengthening municipal infrastructure in refugee-hosting provinces, in recognition that local authorities are the frontline providers of water supply, sanitation, solid waste management and related services. Within this framework, the EU's Municipal Infrastructure portfolio currently comprises four ongoing projects implemented in partnership with AFD, KfW, the World Bank and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change (MoEUCC), with a total EU contribution of EUR 509 million, of which EUR 395 million had been disbursed by the end of 2025.

The EU's strategy in the municipal infrastructure priority area focuses on strengthening the capacity of municipalities to deliver essential services, including potable water supply, wastewater treatment, solid waste management, and recreational infrastructure. The initial intervention under this programme involved a single project targeting improvements in wastewater and solid waste services across four south-eastern provinces.

As Türkiye experienced a substantial influx of refugees, particularly into provinces already facing service delivery challenges, the demand for adequate, reliable, and inclusive municipal infrastructure grew significantly. In response, municipal services became a central pillar of EU support, aimed at helping the Government of Türkiye address these mounting pressures at the local level.

³ Kilis, Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Mersin, Adana, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Mardin and Konya.

⁴ TÜİK <https://biruni.tuik.gov.tr/medas/?kn=120&locale=tr>

⁵ (TÜİK), Waste Statistics 2024, Bulletin No. 54134, 10 November 2025, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Atik-Istatistikleri-2024-54134>

⁶TÜİK Veri Portalı – Belediye Su Göstergeleri https://veriportal.tuik.gov.tr/databrowser/tuik/categories/3/3_2/TR_DF_SU_ATIKSU_BELEDIYE_GOSTERGE_V1.1.0

⁷ TÜİK <https://biruni.tuik.gov.tr/medas/?kn=121&locale=tr>

⁸ Annual performance reports published online by the municipalities and water and sewage administrations in these provinces.

In 2020, the EU launched two major infrastructure projects to support the expansion and upgrading of water supply, sanitation, and solid waste systems in refugee-hosting provinces, implemented in partnership with AFD and the World Bank. In parallel, a third project was initiated with KfW and the Ministry of Youth and Sports to enhance recreational infrastructure in refugee-hosting areas. In 2024, a fourth project was added to the portfolio: a Technical Assistance Facility implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change to support earthquake recovery in the municipal infrastructure sector, with the primary objective of strengthening the capacity of earthquake-affected municipalities to deliver essential services. Together, these interventions aim to ensure that essential services are delivered at the scale and quality required, while minimising environmental impact and improving the financial and operational sustainability of municipal service delivery, in a context of demographic and infrastructural pressures shaped by the refugee response and post-earthquake recovery.

Improving water supply and sanitation systems

The EU refugee support programme has significantly scaled up its efforts in the water supply and sanitation sector, addressing the intensified demand caused by high refugee concentrations in underserved municipalities, particularly in southern and south-eastern Türkiye. As of Q4 2025, 26 water supply and sanitation facilities have been completed under the EU programme, against an aggregate portfolio target of 90 facilities - a target that includes 57 facilities expected to be delivered through the new Technical Assistance Facility for Earthquake Recovery in the municipal infrastructure sector.



The 26 completed facilities span water supply, sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure across the southern and south-eastern provinces. Notable 2025 milestones include the provisional acceptance of the Suruç Sewerage and Stormwater sub-project (December 2025), the Birecik Sewerage Networks (May 2025) and the Alleben Left Shore

Collector Line in Gaziantep (May 2025), all under ŞUSKİ and GASKİ.

The remaining sub-projects are at various stages of implementation. Aggregate completion across the water supply and sanitation portfolio stood at 65% as of Q4 2025, reflecting a continued acceleration of works delivery compared with earlier programme stages.

The Technical Assistance Facility for Earthquake Recovery, launched in December 2024 and implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change with İller Bankası as sub-implementing partner, is expected to add a further 57 water supply and sanitation facilities to the portfolio over its five-year duration. The Facility's objective is to strengthen the capacity of earthquake-affected municipalities to provide essential municipal services, with a particular focus on safely managed water supply and sanitation in the 11 earthquake-affected provinces and supporting metropolitan centres. Implementation has commenced across the sub-project portfolio, with 51 sub-projects currently active in tendering, contracting or construction stages, and a first provisional acceptance issued in October 2025 for the Hatay Dörtüol Drinking Water Network (2nd Stage).

Once fully implemented, the water supply and sanitation components are expected to provide more than 7.65 million people with improved access to safely managed water supply, and more than 8.24 million people with enhanced access to safely managed sanitation services. As of the end of 2025, approximately 1.14 million people have been reached through completed water supply infrastructure and 2.50 million through completed sanitation infrastructure.

Improving solid waste management capacity

Solid waste management remains a pressing concern for municipalities hosting large refugee populations, where additional waste volumes place sustained pressure on collection, treatment and disposal systems. The EU-funded programme has made targeted investments to strengthen the resilience, coverage and environmental compliance of local waste systems.

2025 was a year of substantive progression for the solid waste management pillar of the portfolio. The Kahramanmaraş Northern Districts Integrated Solid Waste Project, implemented under the World Bank MSIP, moved into operation during the year, becoming the most recent SWM facility delivered under the EU programme and bringing the cumulative number of completed facilities to 8 of 10 planned. Under the AFD Municipal Services Project, the pipeline includes the Gaziantep MBT and Biogas Production Facility capacity increase (designed to serve 2.5 million people with a waste handling capacity of 300,000 tonnes per year), the Nizip Solid Waste Landfill complex in Gaziantep



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(74,000 tonnes per year, serving 200,000 people), and the Viranşehir–Ceylanpınar Integrated Solid Waste Management Project in Şanlıurfa (109,000 tonnes per year, serving 360,000 people). The portfolio was further expanded mid-year through the addition of a recycling platform for earthquake debris in Malatya, with a planned capacity of 1 million tonnes per year, intended to support environmentally sound reuse of construction and demolition waste in the earthquake-affected provinces.

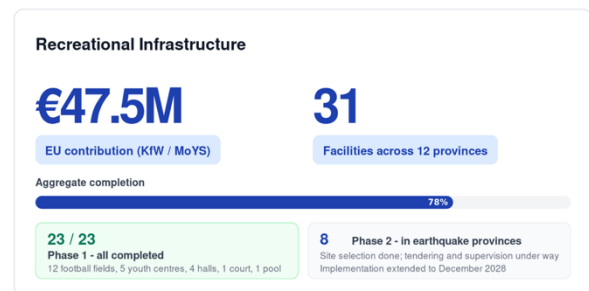
Aggregate completion across the solid waste management portfolio stood at 43% as of Q4 2025. Approximately 294,000 people have been reached to date through completed solid waste management infrastructure, against an end-of-portfolio target of more than 3 million beneficiaries once all facilities are fully operational.

Increasing recreational services capacity

The recreational infrastructure component represents a key element of the EU's broader strategy to strengthen the resilience of municipalities and to address the social dimensions of displacement and integration through inclusive public service provision. It plays a vital role in supporting the mental and physical well-being of children and young people, particularly in urban settings. Given that a significant share of refugees in Türkiye are children and young adults, and that many refugee households reside in economically disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods, ensuring adequate access to sports fields, youth centres and similar amenities in these areas is essential for inclusive activities that foster interaction between refugee and host communities and contribute to stronger social cohesion. Beneficiary feedback captured in the 2025 SUMAR PEA supports this rationale: refugee and host community participants across the surveyed provinces singled out parks and playgrounds as spaces where children from both communities interact and play together, and



noted recent municipal investments in public gardens and recreational areas as a visible improvement.

Implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports through KfW, the project's scope was expanded in late 2024 through Addendum No. 2 to the Contribution Agreement, which increased the EU contribution to EUR 47.5 million and extended the target from 23 to 31 recreational facilities across 12 provinces in southern and south-eastern Türkiye, with the additional 8 facilities to be constructed in earthquake-affected regions. The implementation period was correspondingly extended to December 2028.



As of Q4 2025, all 23 facilities of Phase 1 - comprising 12 football fields, 5 youth centres, 4 training halls, 1 tennis court and 1 swimming pool - have been completed and are operational. Preparation of the 8 additional facilities under Phase 2 is under way, with site selection completed and tendering for civil works supervision and construction in progress. Aggregate completion across the recreational portfolio stood at 78%.

Once fully operational, the recreational facilities are expected to serve approximately 77,800 monthly users. As of the end of 2025, an estimated 46,540 monthly users have already been reached through the operational Phase 1 facilities, providing children, young people and host community members with opportunities for physical activity, social engagement and inclusive community programming.

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