



# EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye

## Priority Area Brief

# Protection and Basic Needs

June 2026

The regime change in Syria on 8 December 2024 resulted in a perceived improvement in security, prompting many Syrian refugees to consider returning to their home country. In response, the Government of Türkiye (GoT) implemented specific measures to facilitate informed, voluntary, safe, dignified, and orderly returns. These measures included authorised go-and-see visits during the first half of 2025 which concluded by the end of June 2025 and enabled Syrian refugees to assess conditions in their places of origin. As of early April 2026, over 600,000 Syrian refugees returned to Syria from Türkiye.

Despite ongoing voluntary returns, which continue at a pace below initial expectations, Türkiye still continues to host one of the world’s largest refugee populations including 2.3 million Syrians under Temporary Protection and approx. 160,000 asylum seekers from different nationalities, necessitating the continued provision of protection services and cash assistance to meet their basic needs.

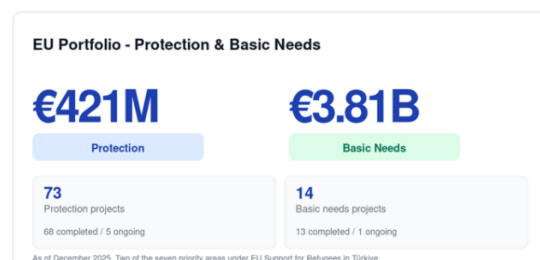
The daily protection needs of refugees encompass legal residency and documentation, access to services, case management and referrals, specialised protection services for children, marginalized groups, and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), psychosocial support, and information regarding rights, services and procedures.

Economic hardship persists among refugee populations in meeting their basic needs. Recent data indicate that debt levels among refugee households continue to rise, with an increasing number of households now falling below the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB). This trend has been accompanied by reduced spending on health and education, increased instances of relocation and child labour, and a declining variety in diets. The proportion of monthly income allocated to food and rent has

grown significantly, reflecting the heightened economic pressures faced by refugees. These challenges are further exacerbated by a substantial increase in the cost of living, as evidenced by a 30.89% annual rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as of December 2025. These pressures are corroborated by findings from the 2025 SUMAR qualitative assessment, in which refugee households across Hatay, Şanlıurfa, and Gaziantep described narrowing dietary diversity, deferred healthcare visits, and increased reliance on informal labour as the cost of living has continued to outpace both wages and monthly cash transfers.

The provision of protection services and the implementation of cash transfer programmes are two of the seven priority areas within the EU Support for Refugees in Türkiye. Collectively, these initiatives are intended to support the GoT in effectively meeting the protection and basic needs of both Syrian and non-Syrian refugees.

In the two sectors, the EU has supported a total of 73 Protection projects (six of which are ongoing and 67 completed), and 14 Basic Needs projects (with one ongoing and 13 completed). As of December 2025, the EU had allocated €421 million to Protection initiatives and €3.81 billion to projects addressing basic needs through cash transfers. In addition, four ECHO-funded projects continue to provide basic needs support through multi-purpose cash assistance. However, unlike the SSN, these interventions do not constitute regular cash assistance programmes.





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## Protection: Main Achievements

### Protection Support Strategy

The Protection Support Strategy acknowledges the wide range of vulnerabilities experienced by refugees and emphasises the need for comprehensive, multi-faceted interventions that integrate direct assistance with the institutional strengthening of government agencies. EU support in this area has prioritised identification of the most vulnerable refugees, raising awareness about their rights, responsibilities and available services, facilitating referrals to specialised support, and delivering targeted protection services including legal counselling and legal aid, child protection services, GBV response. Currently, protection programmes increasingly prioritise community-based interventions aimed at empowering individuals and communities by equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to sustain their lives independently, particularly in the context of declining humanitarian funding. Protection programmes also contribute to the reinforcement of national and local systems by supporting the development and institutionalisation of legal and operational frameworks, thereby enabling refugees to access high-quality services from government institutions.



### Awareness Raising and Information Provision

Awareness-raising and information dissemination activities have been integral components of the protection services provided to refugees by Implementing Partners (IPs). By December 2025, over 1.8 million refugees, 59% of whom were female - had participated in information provision and awareness-raising group sessions supported by the EU. These activities have addressed key protection topics, including available social services and entitlements, legal rights and responsibilities, and psychoeducation. Such efforts have contributed to ensuring that refugees remain informed and are better equipped to navigate Türkiye's evolving legal framework.

### Identification, Assessment and Referral to Services

Vulnerable individuals are identified through both self-referral and proactive outreach by field teams, with particular attention given to those unable to access

services independently due to disability, limited financial resources, caregiving obligations, transportation barriers and other constraints. After identification, a comprehensive protection assessment is undertaken to determine specific risks and needs, and documented vulnerabilities may include cases of gender-based violence, un/de-registered status, social exclusion (such as among LGBTQI+ individuals, persons with disabilities), and child-at-risk situations involving being out-of-school, dropped out, abuse, child labour, or child marriage. For the most at-risk cases, translation and transportation assistance is also provided as well as cash assistance for protection needs. The 2025 SUMAR Provincial Effectiveness Assessment (PEA) further identifies address-verification and registration issues as a structural driver of protection vulnerability, particularly in earthquake-affected provinces. Families whose houses were destroyed report being unable to update records in restricted reconstruction zones, which in turn delays their access to protection, health, and social-assistance services.

Comprehensive identification and assessment efforts have been undertaken to address the protection and social needs of refugees with support from the EU. As of December 2025, over 5 million identification and assessment instances were recorded for protection, social and other services with EU support. Across the four quarters of 2025, an average of 55,000 refugee identification and assessment instances were recorded each quarter.

Following comprehensive assessments, IPs develop individualised protection plans for each case. These plans may include referrals to external service providers, such as government agencies for registration or non-governmental organisations, including bar associations, for legal aid. In addition, IPs may offer direct assistance through their specialised teams, which include psychologists, lawyers, protection officers, and social workers. Qualitative findings from the 2025 SUMAR Assessment underline the value of this specialised support provided by the EU IPs. Refugees also described Bar Association lawyers, TRC caseworkers, and EU-funded legal clinics as decisive actors in helping them navigate registration, address updates, and sensitive legal matters that would otherwise remain unresolved.

According to data, IPs had made over 2.2 million referrals to external service providers by December 2025. Across the four quarters of 2025, an average of 26,000 referrals for refugees were recorded each quarter.

### Provision of Specialised Protection Services

The figures related to protection services underscore the extensive efforts made to address the diverse



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protection needs of the refugee population. Since the start of the EU Support to Refugees programme, nearly 6.2 million protection services have been delivered. Across the four quarters of 2025, an average of 130,000 protection services were delivered. Women are slightly overrepresented (55%) across all protection interventions. Qualitative findings from the 2025 SUMAR Assessment indicate that, while women are the primary users of protection services, awareness of formal gender-based-violence reporting mechanisms remain limited across surveyed provinces. Several women noted that awareness sessions made available in the months following the 2023 earthquakes have tapered off in line with camp closures and shifts in funding priorities.

### Strengthening Government Institutional Capacities

Regarding the social services staff employed (with EU refugee support), there was a sharp decrease of nearly 50% following 2024-Q4, after which the number has remained almost stable. As of 2025-Q4, a total of 558 social services and migration management staff were employed. By December 2025, a total of 4,196 social service facility staff received training, which is anticipated to enhance their ability to effectively address the needs of vulnerable populations.

The number of social service facilities upgraded with equipment, furniture, and vehicles through EU support has remained unchanged at 141 since 2025-Q1 because the necessary resources had already been provided.

## Basic Needs: Main Achievements

### Basic Needs Support Strategy

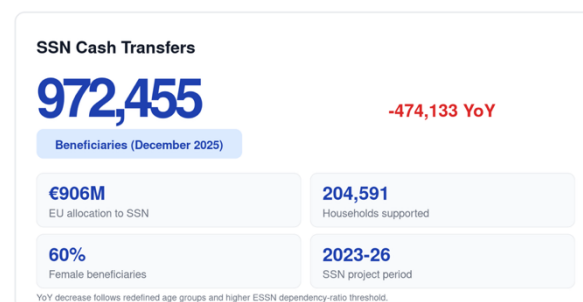
The Basic Needs Support Strategy aims to mitigate the economic challenges faced by vulnerable refugees mainly through the provision of regular and predictable cash transfers while also providing multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) to earthquake survivors who are displaced following the closure of temporary settlements and struggling to meet basic needs, particularly shelter. This approach is intended to empower refugees to meet their essential needs independently, thereby reducing their reliance on negative coping mechanisms and promoting greater financial stability.

### Unconditional Cash Transfer Support

The Social Safety Net (SSN) project (2023-2026), implemented by MoFSS and TRC, is an unconditional cash transfer programme in Türkiye designed to provide regular cash transfer support to vulnerable refugees under temporary and international protection, as well as to humanitarian residency holders and international protection applicants. A key

strength of this project lies in addressing the basic needs of vulnerable refugees and facilitating referrals to livelihood opportunities. The 2025 SUMAR Assessment corroborates the central role of the programme in household resilience. Beneficiaries, particularly those in earthquake-affected provinces, described the monthly transfer as a critical stabilising force during the months following the 2023 earthquakes, when homes, workplaces, and documents were lost and household income sources were disrupted.

### Achievements in Meeting Basic Needs



For the SSN, the EU allocated a total of €906 million. In December 2025, unconditional monthly cash transfers were provided to 972,455 vulnerable refugees, 60% of whom were female - across 204,591 households, representing a decrease of 474,133 beneficiaries compared to the previous year. The reduction in the number of cash transfer beneficiaries was mainly attributable to recent modifications in eligibility criteria and administrative adjustments. Specifically, the redefinition of age groups, including the adjustment of the working-age bracket from 18-59 to 18-64, and the increase in the ESN dependency-ratio threshold from 1.5 to 2 resulted in more restrictive access to assistance and a decrease in the overall caseload. These changes were implemented as part of a targeted strategy to reduce programme coverage.

### Satisfaction Level of the SSN Beneficiaries

According to Q4 2025 survey findings, the application processes for both the ESN and C-ESN projects were generally regarded as accessible by almost all beneficiaries. The results of the SSN Satisfaction Survey 2025 (SSN-2nd Round) provide insights into the satisfaction levels of SSN beneficiaries with respect to various services offered under the project. Findings on overall satisfaction with the SSN project indicate that the expectations of the majority of beneficiaries have been met, with satisfaction levels exceeding 90% of the respondents. Beneficiary feedback captured in the 2025 SUMAR Assessment supports this high satisfaction level. Participants attributed particular value to the predictability and regularity of the monthly transfer, while also flagging continued uncertainty about how eligibility decisions are reached



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and limited avenues to clarify suspensions following reassessments.

When asked about their reasons for benefiting from the project, 30% of C-ESSN respondents indicated that they were unaware of the specific reasons, while 58% described their eligibility in terms of dependency and vulnerability indicators. Among ESSN respondents, these figures were 42% and 38%, respectively. Overall, the level of awareness regarding eligibility criteria was relatively higher among C-ESSN respondents.

There has been a slight decline in respondents' satisfaction with the amount of cash assistance compared to the previous reporting period, primarily due to rising living costs; nevertheless, beneficiaries continue to place a high value on the regularity and predictability of the assistance. Among ESSN respondents, 60% reported being satisfied or very satisfied, while 20% reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. C-ESSN respondents reported slightly higher satisfaction, with rates of 66% and 17%, respectively.

Survey findings indicate exceptionally high levels of satisfaction with KIZILAYKART delivery services, with over 97% of ESSN and C-ESSN respondents expressing satisfaction. These results show that the service model continues to be effective, including for the most vulnerable beneficiary groups targeted under the C-ESSN. Moreover, 94% of both ESSN and C-ESSN respondents reported encountering no difficulties when withdrawing their cash assistance from ATMs, indicating a high level of accessibility and reliability in the cash withdrawal process.

According to data collected between May and September 2025 for the 3rd Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) Report on the SSN project (February 2026), school attendance rates were higher among children from households benefiting from the ESSN project in comparison to those from non-recipient households, with a difference of 3% for girls and 6% for boys. For the C-ESSN project, there is no significant difference compared with non-recipient households.

### Socio-economic Conditions of Refugee Households

According to the 3<sup>rd</sup> PDM Report on the SSN project, while the income level declined by 23% in C-ESSN households in one year, it has increased by 18% in ESSN households. SSN beneficiaries continue to rely



heavily on informal, daily labour, with rates reaching 71% among C-ESSN households and 67% among ESSN households. Although reliance on SSN cash assistance has declined, it remains the second most significant source of income for both ESSN and C-ESSN households, following unskilled labour.

The proportion of households falling below the MEB threshold has risen substantially and only 40% of ESSN and 13% of C-ESSN recipient households have expenditures above the MEB. This shortfall is largely attributable to the rising prices of basic goods, resulting in an increase in the MEB threshold.

With regard to expenditure patterns, food and rent constitute the two largest household expense categories, comprising 41% and 26% of total expenditures, respectively. This increased allocation to essential items has been accompanied by a significant reduction in spending on other categories, particularly education and clothing. Expenditures on education and clothing declined by 10% and 6%, which may be attributable to the timing of the survey during the spring and summer months.

The survey results reveal a significant disparity between household income and expenditure levels. Expenditures exceed income in approximately 83% of ESSN and 86% of C-ESSN households.

The most pronounced increase in debt was observed among ESSN households, with a 30% rise, followed by non-recipient households at 15% and C-ESSN households at 11%. The main drivers of indebtedness indicate that borrowing is primarily used to cover essential needs rather than non-essential items. Food is the most frequently borrowed item, reported by 80% of indebted households, followed by other basic needs such as rent (40%), utilities (28%), and essential non-food items (26%). These quantitative findings align closely with qualitative testimony from the 2025 SUMAR Assessment, in which households across the three surveyed provinces described rotating debt at local shops as a near-universal coping mechanism, alongside reductions in meal frequency, deferred medical appointments, and, in some households, adolescent boys undertaking informal work to contribute to rent and basic food costs.

<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 </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: <a href="#">EU support to partner countries on migration and forced displacement - European Commission</a>.</p>
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