Education has been a priority area since the launch of the EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye in 2016. The EU has provided large scale funding to the Government of Türkiye to support educational integration for over a million school-age Syrian refugee children while ensuring the quality of education is maintained for Turkish children. The first tranche of EU funding was focused on Syrian refugees, but the following tranches have included support for refugees of all nationalities and benefits for host community children and youth.

EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye is focused on strengthening the capacity of the Government of Türkiye to provide quality education to all children, with activities focused in the provinces with the highest number and concentration of refugees. This is especially important in the south-eastern provinces of Türkiye, which have historically been less developed and have a high proportion of refugees.

By June 2023, the EU had allocated a total of EUR 2.36 billion for education projects, which represents 31% of the EUR 7.6 billion funding committed by the EU in Türkiye. Out of 28 education projects, for which 1.9 billion has been disbursed, eleven projects are ongoing and 17 are completed. Seven of these projects were funded as humanitarian support and 21 were funded as development projects.

**Barriers to Education Participation**

Initially, Syrian refugees attended Temporary Education Centres (TECs) which provided classes in Arabic. In 2017 the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) began integrating Syrian refugee children into the formal education system and refugee students began studying alongside their Turkish peers.

Enrolment rates for Syrian refugees have increased steadily over time. In 2014, only 30% of school-age refugee children were enrolled in formal education\(^1\), but by January 2022, MoNE reported a gross enrolment rate of 65% for refugee children aged six to 17 years which includes grades 1-12 and upper secondary level distance-learning and accelerated learning classes\(^2\). Enrolment rates vary by level: 35% of refugee children age five were enrolled in preschool, 71% of refugee children aged six to nine were enrolled in primary school, 79% of children aged 10 to 13 were enrolled in lower secondary school and 42% of children aged 14 to 17 were enrolled at the upper secondary level including distance learning and secondary school preparation classes. MoNE data indicates that there were still 400,000-school age Syrian refugee children not participating in education; this number does not include unregistered refugees or non-Syrian refugees.

Gender influences education participation for refugee children and youth. While boys slightly outnumber girls in primary, they become a slight minority in lower and upper secondary school.

Survey data indicates that children’s participation in education is negatively impacted by multiple factors\(^3\). Refugee families struggle economically and school associated costs such as transport, learning materials and uniforms can be a barrier to attendance. Children may need to assist with household responsibilities while older family members work, and older children - especially boys - may work and contribute to family income rather than attend school. Research indicates that parents with less education are more likely to withdraw children from school to cope with economic difficulties\(^4\).

Refugee children may face difficulties registering at school, with some families reporting challenges providing required legal and academic documents for enrolment. While families unable to provide required documentation were previously able to register children

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\(^1\) MoNE, 2019. Education of Children under Temporary Protection in Turkey.

\(^2\) MoNE, Directorate of Lifelong Learning, 2022.

\(^3\) Evaluative Learning Study for Phase III of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Assistance for Refugees in Turkey, 2022.
on a preliminary basis, this is no longer the case. Additionally, some schools may refuse to enrol refugee children because schools are overcrowded or because they want to manage the proportion of refugees attending the school. Families who move on a seasonal basis to conduct agricultural work or who live at a different address from the one on their registration documents, may face particular challenges in enrolling in education as children should register at the school nearest to their officially registered address.

The February 2023 earthquakes disrupted learning, with many children and teachers displaced and schools damaged. When classes resumed, attendance continued to be low in provinces which had experienced the greatest damage. Some displaced families have reported difficulties registering their new addresses with the Presidency of Migration Management and this also represents a barrier to education participation as both parents and children must have valid registration with their current address to enrol in school. It is likely that the learning losses, trauma and socio-economic fragility resulting from the earthquake will have long term consequences for children’s education.

For some children, limited Turkish language skills may also be a barrier to effective participation in classes, especially in higher grades, which require greater language fluency to cope with more demanding class content. Refugee children may also experience difficulties interacting with their Turkish peers and families report that bullying at school is a key reason for children dropping out.

In spite of these challenges, 92% of school children surveyed reported that they love their teachers, 89% indicated that they love their school friends and 89% reported that they love learning, and these factors also have a have significant impact on regular school attendance.

The EU’s Refugee Education Support Strategy
The Education Priority Area support strategy is designed to respond to the challenges identified above. The strategy addresses barriers to the participation of refugees in education, delivering a wide variety of support activities in schools and activities focused primarily on supporting education in the provinces with the highest numbers and highest proportion of refugees. The strategy is focused on formal education, covering pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary and vocational education, but also includes distance and accelerated learning opportunities as well as Turkish and Arabic language classes.

The figure below summarises the education strategy, which is designed to support the Government of Türkiye’s provision of quality education to both refugee and host community students. The strategy focuses on enhancing the delivery of support services in schools; providing logistical and financial support to improve participation in education; increasing the number and capacity of education staff and enhancing of educational infrastructure in the refugee-concentrated provinces.

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6 Refugees are registered at a specific address and cannot access government services outside of the area where they are registered.
8 CCTE Project. 2023. Survey of Students.
Education Achievements

EU-funded projects have provided a broad range of activities to support education including construction, rehabilitation and equipment of educational facilities, the development of educational courses and materials, the provision of financial and in-kind support to reduce economic barriers to participation in education at all levels, the recruitment and training of educational staff and provision of programmes to increase social cohesion between refugees and their Turkish peers. Projects have also helped young adults to access post-secondary education, with scholarships and transport to attend both university and vocational education courses.

General Courses and Support

The EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye and MoNE-implemented Promoting Integration of Syrian Kids into the Turkish Education System (PIKTES) projects, with a collective value of EUR 997 million, have provided a broad range of support to thousands of schools in high refugee concentration provinces. Activities have focused on integrating refugee children into the formal education system. This has included the provision of pre-primary education to prepare children for first grade and Turkish language classes to enhance their ability to participate in education.

The PIKTES projects have provided a variety of psycho-social support services to refugee children, many of whom have experienced trauma. Additionally, the projects have provided 3,379,996 learning materials kits for both Turkish and refugee children, including backpacks, school materials and Turkish language and pre-school learning materials. The project has also reinforced educational staffing capacities, hiring new staff and compensating existing MoNE staff for providing additional education services. PIKTES projects have trained 82,848 teachers, school administrators, school counsellors and other MoNE staff members to support both refugee and Turkish students more effectively.

Key PIKTES achievements to-date include providing Turkish language classes for 283,116 children and pre-primary education for 174,958 refugee and Turkish children. From April-June of 2023, PIKTES+ supported 54,730 refugee and Turkish students with a variety of psycho-social support activities including seminars, after school activities and individual counselling sessions.

To ensure that schools with a significant proportion of refugee students are providing quality learning environments for all their students, the EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye has supported the upgrading and equipping of schools and other educational facilities, including the provision of smart boards and libraries, and the installation of rooftop solar panels and energy efficient upgrades to schools.

Economic Support for Education Participation

A major component of the EU’s support to refugee education is the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) programme which began in 2017. Over its four phases the programme has provided the families of 895,994 children with cash payments conditional on children meeting MoNE attendance requirements. Families need to meet specific eligibility criteria to receive cash transfers and payments are made bimonthly and households receive a debit card which they can use for purchases or to obtain cash. The programme benefits students participating in formal education and accelerated learning programs. Supplemental payments are also made at the beginning of each semester to support the purchase of school materials. Cash transfers support preschool, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and distance learning participation, and have benefitted almost equal numbers of girls and boys. Payment amounts are differentiated by age and gender, with higher payments for girls and secondary school students.

Cash transfer activities are supplemented with child assessment and support services including psychosocial seminars, psychological assessment and referrals to other projects and agencies to help resolve barriers to education participation. The CCTE project has provided protection assessment for 119,549 children, of whom 43,119 were referred to specialised assistance to provide additional support.

The EU has also supported projects to facilitate participation in vocational education and to promote the development of livelihood skills for refugee and host community children and youth aged 14-17 years. Some 10,612 refugee and host community students have completed a secondary level vocational training programme. The EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye has also supported access to tertiary education, with 54,969 young adults supported to attend post-secondary vocational or university education courses. By June 2023, 430 refugee students had completed tertiary level education programmes.
At the end of 2022, contracts were signed for two additional higher education support projects in response to a policy change. While Syrian refugees were previously able to study at state universities without paying for tuition, the new policy requires them to pay tuition fees. The ESPS and BEURS projects will provide tuition fees and stipends for living and study costs and offer a variety of activities including academic and language support, career counselling and activities to improve cohesion between refugee and Turkish students.

**Education Infrastructure Capacity**

The EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye is funding projects to ensure that educational facilities can provide conducive learning environments for refugee and host community students. A total of 17,679 educational facilities have been upgraded or equipped with materials. This includes provision of classroom and recreational equipment, installation of prefabricated or container classrooms for special education and preschool classes and general classrooms in areas where schools were damaged or destroyed by the earthquake. Upgrades include rooftop solar energy panels, energy efficiency upgrades and refurbishment of public education centres which provide hybrid and online education classes. Vocational education projects renovated 149 vocational education facilities and have provided up-to-date equipment and workshops. The Clean Energy project was designed to increase energy security and reduce energy costs. The project has installed solar panels on school roofs to provide for the schools’ energy needs, with excess power fed back into the electrical grid. At the end of 2022, the rooftop solar cell installations had produced 12,000 megawatt hours of electricity, with an approximate value of EUR 1.4 million. The project also retrofits schools with energy efficiency upgrades to reduce energy use; these two strategies have resulted in lower energy costs for MoNE while helping develop awareness of sustainable energy solutions and energy efficiency. The project has already completed solar panel installation at 50 sites and energy efficiency upgrades in 41 schools. While solar farms had been planned as part of this project, this funding was reallocated to reinforcing the structure of schools in provinces impacted by the earthquake.

Some EU 575 million has been set aside for construction of education facilities, with 155 new education facilities constructed in provinces with a high concentration of refugees. Of these, 59 were for primary education, 43 for lower secondary and 35 for upper secondary. Also included were six vocational education centres and two public education centres which host a variety of learning opportunities. The infrastructure development projects are managed by international institutions including KfW and World Bank and implemented by MoNE, with the projects providing system strengthening to enable MoNE to respond to the additional demands of implementing the projects. Education for All I, II and III and Education infrastructure for Resilience projects reported that schools constructed with EU funding did not suffer any major structural damage as the result of the earthquake.

**Improved Education Staffing Level and Quality**

From April to June of 2023, the PIKTES project provided salaries for 19,975 teachers, school security staff and cleaners to ensure that schools have the staff needed to provide a conducive learning environment. A variety of other projects have provided training for school staff and education administrators, with 236,130 individuals trained to-date, using online, face-to-face and hybrid training modalities.

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9 EU Scholarships for Perspective Students and European Union Scholarships.