EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye
Priority Area Brief

Livelihoods
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(Data values – June 2023)

The foundation of the current assistance strategy of the EU’s Support to Refugees in Türkiye is to ensure refugees’ economic self-sufficiency and provide Livelihoods support for disadvantaged Turkish citizens. The strategy aims to achieve the economic independence of the targeted groups through income generation, either from employment or from running small businesses.

The EU supports 14 Livelihoods projects, consisting of seven ongoing and seven completed. By June 2023, the EU had allocated EUR 560 million to Livelihoods development projects, with approximately EUR 379 million already disbursed by the end of June 2023.

The initial post-earthquake assessment conducted by the Government of Türkiye in collaboration with several international agencies estimated that around 700,000 informally employed individuals in the five most affected provinces would remain unemployed for two quarters. This has had a significant impact on their livelihoods. Before the earthquakes, refugees heavily relied on informal work. However, the disaster increased competition for limited informal jobs, making it harder for refugees to secure paid work. A total of 622,384 persons in the earthquakes' region are registered as unemployed.

While both the refugee and host communities encounter a range of challenges in accessing formal employment and earning income for their families, many of these issues are related to low education levels and technical skills. The refugee community faces further challenges due to their refugee status, including limited proficiency in the Turkish language, difficulties in accessing information on employment opportunities, and bureaucratic barriers such as restrictions on working outside their registered province for most types of work. They encounter difficulties in providing the required documents to open a business or bank account. Cultural and social norms create obstacles for women in accessing the job market.

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2 Türkiye Earthquakes Recovery and reconstruction Assessment
Some refugees hesitate to give up their social assistance cash transfers by entering formal employment due to concerns about job stability or whether the improved conditions would justify the change. Since 2016, the Government of Türkiye has allowed Syrian refugees to participate in the formal labour market. The issuance of work permits to Syrian nationals has seen a consistent increase, reaching 113,207 permits in 2022. There is currently no updated information regarding the issuance of work permits to Syrians in Türkiye, as the data for 2023 is expected to be released in the Qrt 1 of 2024.

The majority of refugees work without any social security, typically enduring extremely challenging working conditions and receiving wages below the standard market rates. Critical occupational health and safety aspects are often overlooked, particularly in hazardous occupations such as manufacturing and construction. Most Syrian refugees work in trade, construction, and manufacturing, focusing on industries such as textile, clothing, leather goods and footwear. According to several studies, including ILO 2020 study, some 8 to 12% of working Syrians under temporary protection are employed in the agriculture sector. However, the actual level of employment in agriculture is expected to be much higher since all of studies rely on household surveys that exclude mobile seasonal agriculture workers, while many SuTPs in seasonal agriculture reside in temporary accommodation facilities. As the World Bank report confirms more than 80% of workers in the sector are informal. The agricultural sector has a higher participation rate among women than in other sectors, with women often taking on seasonal low-paid and low-skilled jobs.

Syrian refugees in Türkiye have a legal right to start businesses, and many individuals with the necessary skills and investment capital have established their enterprises since they arrived in the country. The level of establishment of new enterprises by Syrian refugees has fluctuated considerably in recent years. There has been a slight increase in the number of Syrian-owned businesses established in Türkiye from 3,240 in 2021 to 3,683 in 2022. The data for Syrian-owned enterprises registered in Türkiye for 2023 is still pending release.

Livelihoods

Livelihoods Priority Area Intervention Logic

5 Assorted other sectors accounted for the remaining percentage. Reported in a 2020 study by International Labour Organization using the 2017 Household Labour Force Survey data.
concentration areas in creating income-generating opportunities. This support aims at increasing their ability to find employment, increasing their employability, including young graduates from school and those previously benefiting from the EU funded Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) income-support programme.

Another aspect of Livelihoods’ support involves assisting the beneficiaries to establish or expand their small businesses in various sectors, including services, agriculture, textiles, manufacturing and Information and Communications Technology.

Improving employability

The main types of support provided include short-term vocational training courses, including On-the-Job Training (OJT), “soft” skills training, counselling, and support services to help people identify work opportunities and to be more effective in their application processes. By the end of June 2023, overall, 19,244 refugees and host community members in high refugee concentration provinces obtained new jobs or improved employment following participation in EU support programmes. Vocational skills training includes short courses - typically of two to three months’ duration provided by Public Education Centres (PECs) or Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) - and the subsidised placement of beneficiaries in companies via OJT. Companies can also receive subsidies in return for creating new (formal) jobs for refugees and host community members. During the first half of 2023, an additional 4,706 beneficiaries were registered for short-term vocational skills development training sessions, bringing the total number of supported beneficiaries to just over 72,000. Many of the EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye projects supporting vocational skills development are implemented by international institutions in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS), the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR), the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), as well as industry associations such as the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) and the Traders and Artisans Confederation of Türkiye (TESK).

Soft skills training provides beneficiaries (both refugees and Turkish citizens) with knowledge on how to access and navigate the Turkish labour market and its institutions, and how to prosper in Turkish workplaces. By the end of June 2023, 3,352 refugees and host community members were provided with basic labour market skills training. The number of men who benefited from the soft skills training is slightly higher than that of women who benefited from it.

Employment counselling services cover career guidance and referrals to job or training opportunities. Such EU-funded services are mainly provided by private/non-governmental organisations, as well as by the İŞKUR. A total of 124,205 refugees and host community members have benefitted from EU-funded counselling services since the start of the EU support. There were 72,364 refugees registered with İŞKUR, and 18,174 refugees and host community members obtained employment through İŞKUR in 2023.

The EU also provides financial or material assistance to refugees and host community artisans and traders to help them establish or expand their economic activity. By the end of June 2023, approximately 1,594 artisans and traders received support.

Enterprise development

Enterprise development constitutes the second core strand of the EU’s Livelihoods assistance programme, encompassing support for the establishment of new enterprises and the expansion of existing ones. This assistance also contributes to the creation of new jobs in the local...
labour market. The EU has been instrumental in supporting the establishment of social enterprises in the form of cooperatives. The EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye funded projects aim to provide support services, incubation, and acceleration for social enterprises, fostering their growth and impact. The earthquakes had a notable impact on SMEs in the region, leading to substantial disruptions in their business operations. Some enterprises diverted their operational funds to support relief efforts, potentially affecting their operational capacity even more.\footnote{12 Spark (2023) Entrepreneurs picking up the pieces after the deadly earthquake. Economic reconstruction needed now.}

Entrepreneurship training is delivered through various methods. Whilst some approaches consist only of training sessions, several projects combine this with the provision of a small amount of start-up capital, materials, or equipment to get their business going. Entrepreneurs are often guided and supported in developing business plans. By the end of June 2023, more than 5,500 beneficiaries, including refugees and host community members, received entrepreneurship training.

Enterprise advisory services are offered by various EU projects, delivering personalised coaching to support small businesses (both start-ups and existing ones) in adopting new technologies, accessing new markets, or forging relationships with other larger enterprises. By the end of June 2023, 2,496 enterprises had benefited from these advisory services.

Financial and material support: Access to finance continues to be a significant challenge for SMEs, attributed to insufficient financial transparency, absence of bankable business plans, low credit ratings, and inability to meet collateral requirements. Syrian-owned SMEs encounter severe lack of funding and credit constraints as they lack access to formal loans, forcing them to resort to alternative financing. As of June 2023, 1,381 enterprises have received financial and material support through the EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye funding.

Turkish language training: The EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye has supported a range of development organisations to provide Turkish language training to refugee adults as components of eleven projects (eight completed and three ongoing). These have mostly been provided through PECs. Almost half of the training beneficiaries completed beginner-level courses (A1), while 28% completed A1-level courses. Approximately 57,818 adult refugees have completed Turkish language courses by June 2023.

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 approximately four million refugees from neighbouring countries (over 90% of whom are from Syria) since 2011. To-date, the EU has allocated more than EUR 9 billion to support approximately 165 projects covering a wide range of sectors. This Brief has been prepared by SUMAF, which provides monitoring and reporting services to the EU relating to the refugee support programme. The data quoted in the Briefing Note is valid as of the end of June 2023. The source of the data quoted is SUMAF Data Management System unless otherwise mentioned. For more information, go to: https://ec.europa.eu/neighborhood-enlargement/news_comer/migration

\*Facility for Refugees in Turkey (‘the Facility’) and the additional EU funding mobilised since 2020 are collectively referred to as ‘EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye’.