The provision of protection services and the operation of cash transfer programmes to cover vulnerable refugees’ basic needs are two of the seven priority areas of the European Union (EU) Support to Refugees in Türkiye which was established in 2016. The aim of the programme is to support the Government of Türkiye (GoT) in responding appropriately to the large numbers of refugees which arrived from Syria and other countries in the region since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011.

The EU has supported a total of 60 protection projects (12 ongoing, 48 completed) and 13 basic needs projects (2 ongoing, 11 completed). By June 2023, the EU had allocated EUR 393 million to protection and EUR 2.68 billion to basic needs projects. In the first years of EU support, several projects were mainly humanitarian projects implemented by a range of international and national Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies. It is noted that numerous services initially provided under humanitarian aid have transitioned to development funding. Since the end of 2022, the largest programmes are being implemented by the GoT with the collaboration of the Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye.

On the 6 February 2023, two devastating earthquakes (EQs) struck, where the largest refugee population resides “48,440 thousand people lost their lives”¹ and many were injured in the 11 provinces affected in Southeast Türkiye. The EQs also affected 1.8 million refugees, 47% of whom were Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) and Complementary-Emergency Social Safety Net (C-ESSN) beneficiaries. Based on humanitarian aid support, the EU and partners quickly responded to the identified needs in the EQ affected provinces by re-purposing the funds of the ongoing projects to cover the urgent needs under WASH (wash, sanitation, and hygiene), food security and nutrition, shelter and settlement, health, basic needs and protection sectors. In total, EUR 35.3M has been re-allocated while additional EUR 43.2M has been contracted with 16 different partners. Challenges persist as the loss of livelihood opportunities in the EQ-affected areas has led to a rapid decline in the number of households from both refugee and host communities that can meet their basic needs.

Protection

Awareness raising and information provision

Group sessions have been conducted for refugees to raise awareness of their rights and responsibilities in accessing tailored support. Since the beginning of the EU support, awareness-raising, and information-provision activities have been common protection services provided to refugees by the project implementing agencies (known as ‘Implementing Partners’ or IPs).

As of June 2023, 1.6 million refugees benefitted from group awareness-raising sessions concerning their rights and conditions. Additionally, refugees were informed of any changes/updates in regulations affecting their lives in Türkiye. Since February 2023, group awareness and information sessions have mostly covered topics on lost documentation (ID cards) and the available services for EQ survivors. On the other side, through the regular protection programmes operating outside of the EQ affected area, refugees continued to be informed on their legal rights and responsibilities as well as access to specialized

Support to vulnerable individuals

Protection service provision starts with the assessment of the needs of the identified (vulnerable) individual living in rural areas with limited access to the service centres by local project IPs. These individuals are identified through different modalities such as “self-referral” - meaning that the individual reaches out to the service provider themselves - or through their participation in outreach activities conducted by the service providers. Following the identification process, a detailed protection assessment to ascertain their specific protection risks and needs is conducted. Vulnerabilities identified are documented – GBV, unregistered cases, individuals marginalised from society such as the LGBTI community and child-at-risk cases (child abuse, child workers, child marriages etc.), need of translation and transportation support to facilitate access to services.

Based on the results of the assessment, a protection plan is designed by the protection project IP. This involves either referring the case to an external service provider (governmental organisations for issues such as registration problems) and NGOs (such as the bar association) for legal issues. Alternatively, the IP may provide the necessary support directly itself using specialised protection staff such as psychologists, lawyers, protection officers and social workers.

Since the inception of EU support, nearly 4.3 million refugees have been identified and assessed with almost 1.3 million individuals referred to relevant external providers. In the first half of 2023, 358,376 individuals were identified and assessed by EU-supported projects, a 12% increase on the number recorded for quarter 4 2022. The rise can be attributed to the movement of refugees resulting from the EQs whilst the drop in numbers in Istanbul was due to its closure to new registrations.

To-date, more than 1.6 million referrals to external service providers for over one million refugees have been made by IPs. A large proportion of the referrals were made to social assistance services (25%) and to education services (22%). Many of the referrals are related to the psychological impact of the EQs on children, teachers and families.

The data collected under the EU support’s monitoring system showed that over the first half of 2023, of those identified and assessed, 21% accounted for child-at-risk cases and this is followed by registration related needs/vulnerabilities with 5%.

Protection Priority Area Intervention Logic

[Diagram showing the intervention logic with outputs and outcomes]

2 This figure may include some double counting as there could be repetitive identification of the same refugees by different IPs.
Provision of specialized protection services

Refugees identified and assessed as “under risk and in need of protection support”, are provided with specialised protection services as outlined above. By the end of the first half of 2023, over 2.7 million of the 4.3 million identified and assessed refugees had been provided with 4.8 million protection services. When compared to the second half of 2022, a significant increase was observed in the level of individual psycho-social support service delivery in the first six months of 2023 (from 21,311 in the previous reporting period to 95,618 in this reporting period) to respond to the worsening mental health status of those refugees who have been negatively impacted by the EQs, their deteriorating social and economic circumstances. The period also saw a surge in irregular migration trend towards Europe compared to the same period of 2022 and challenges concerning access to registration linked with the new policies/practices regarding closed neighbourhoods, deactivation, loss of documentation after EQs, etc. This led to a significant increase in the demand for legal assistance and information counselling services.

Strengthening GoT institutional capacities

As part of the implementation of the EU’s protection support programme, the GoT’s institutional capacity has been strengthened through supporting staffing and the provision of trainings on specialised topics. In the first half of 2023, the employment of 665 Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) staff were supported, representing an achievement of the target for GoT staff employment support. Over the first six months of 2023, there was a significant increase in the number of SSCs upgraded with an additional 62 upgraded, bringing the total to 134 – which is 94% of the 142 target. Two supported projects currently under implementation by the MoFSS aim to upgrade 112 SSCs through the provision of equipment, furniture and vehicles. Vehicles are also being provided to the ministry’s Child Protection Units and to the Directorate General for Women Services. A recent SUMAF project review mission conducted to one of the MoFSS projects reported that the majority of the beneficiaries were referred to SSCs and Day-Care-Centres by relatives, neighbours or acquaintances. All expressed their satisfaction with the services received, with some praising the level of care and attention provided by the SCC staff.

Basic Needs

Basic Needs Priority Area Intervention Logic

Unconditional cash transfer support

By the end of June 2023, 1.9 million vulnerable refugees were receiving unconditional monthly cash transfers, and this was a reduction of 105,000 beneficiaries from December 2022 through ESSN which covers 80% of the total number of beneficiaries, and C-ESSN which covers the rest. C-ESSN is focused on supporting the most vulnerable refugees and the programmes provide a regular source of income which enables recipients to cover some of their basic or essential monthly expenditures and therefore helps them avoid the use of very negative coping strategies. However, the amounts are insufficient to entirely cover these needs and hence need to be complemented by other sources of income. As of June, 53% of the programmes’ beneficiaries were female and less than 10% were non-Syrian refugees.
Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)

The EU-funded ESSN Programme provides cash assistance to more than 1.5 million refugees living in Türkiye. It is implemented through a partnership between the International Federation of Red Cross Societies (IFRC) and the TRC. ESSN provides its regular cash transfers to beneficiary families, the value of which is based on the number of members in the family. The programme provides additional quarterly top-up payments.

According to the 17th Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) survey of ESSN conducted between May and July 2023, of the approximately 1.5 million beneficiaries, 59% of the ESSN beneficiaries had monthly expenditures above the minimum level enquired to meet their basic needs. This represents a drop of thirteen percentage points compared to 72% reported for the end of 2022. This indicates that, between PDM 16 and 17, the economic conditions have worsened for the ESSN beneficiaries and in general for refugee population.

Complementary Emergency Social Safety Net (C-ESSN)

The EU-funded C-ESSN programme is implemented by the MoFSS and the TRC and uses the same application process as that used for the ESSN. The programme targets the most vulnerable groups, namely single-parent/adult families (i.e. with one working age household with at least one child), elderly-headed households and families with at least one member with disability. At the end of Qtr 2 of this year, 380,707 refugees were receiving the MoFSS-managed C-ESSN programme support.

Despite the support provided through the programme, the situation relating to refugees receiving C-ESSN transfers appeared to be more difficult than for the ESSN beneficiaries. According to data collected by MoFSS/TRC over the first half of 2023, only 33% of the 380,000 C-ESSN beneficiaries had monthly expenditures above the minimum level required to meet their basic needs.

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/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_corner/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’.

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3 Findings of ESSN Post-Distribution Monitoring Survey – PDM (Round 17) – IFRC-TRC.