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Eighth Annual Report of the Facility for Refugees in Türkiye

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1. Introduction

Under Article 8 (1) of the Commission Decision of 24 November 2015[1] on coordinating EU and Member State actions through a coordination mechanism ('the Decision'), the Commission must keep the European Parliament and the Council regularly informed about the implementation of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey ('the Facility'). Under Article 8 (2) of the Decision, the Commission must report annually to the European Parliament and to the Council on the Facility's implementation. The first Annual Report on the Facility was published in March 2017[2]. All annual reports can be found on the Facility for Refugees website. The cut-off date for this report is February 2024.

1.1. Türkiye and the refugee crisis

Due to its geographic position, Türkiye is a prominent reception and transit country for refugees and migrants. In January 2024, according to data provided by the Turkish government, the country hosted 3 199 927 Syrians under temporary protection and more than 300 000 registered refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Somalia[3,4]. This very large number of people has had a significant impact on the host communities. The protracted displacement of Syrian refugees and the increasing number of irregular arrivals from Afghanistan in Türkiye represents an increasing challenge to social cohesion between refugees, migrants and host communities. At the same time, there continues to be pressure along the Turkish-Iranian border.

Türkiye continues to make very significant efforts in hosting and addressing the needs of refugees and migrants and has reiterated its commitment to implement the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016[5] ('the Statement'). The Statement continued to deliver concrete results in 2023. However, although still lower than the pre-Statement figures, irregular arrivals to Greece increased, especially through the sea route, while arrivals in Italy and in the government-controlled territory of Cyprus decreased considerably[6].

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[1] Commission Decision C(2015) 9500 of 24.11.2015 on the coordination of the actions of the Union and of the Member States through a coordination mechanism – the Refugee Facility for Turkey, as amended by Commission Decision C(2016)855 of 10.2.2016.

[2] 9dc8736f-c734-48be-8678-aca919a6a1bf_en (europa.eu)

[3] https://en.goc.gov.tr/irregular-migration

[4] A specific characteristic of the Turkish asylum system is linked to the fact that the country has signed the 1967 New York Protocol of the 1951 Geneva Convention with a reservation. Accordingly, the vast majority of refugees in Türkiye cannot apply for fully-fledged refugee status but for 'Conditional Refugee' status only, which, if granted, limits the stay in the country until the moment a recognised refugee is 'resettled to a third country'.

[5] http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement/

[6] Between January and October 2023, 39 619 irregular migrants arrived in the EU from Türkiye compared to 34 459 arrivals during the same period in 2022 – a 15% increase. The sea route to Italy saw a substantial decrease (by 63%). However, in 2023 in total, irregular arrivals by sea to Greece saw a more than threefold (210%) increase compared to 2022. Arrivals to Greece by land also increased by 7%. At the same time, the

The 'One-for-One' resettlement scheme continued to be implemented under the Statement. Between April 2016 and January 2024, almost 41 000 Syrian refugees were resettled from Türkiye to the EU. Since 2016, under the Statement, 2 140 migrants have been returned from the Greek islands to Türkiye. As the Turkish authorities have not revoked their decision of March 2020 to suspend return operations under the Statement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no return operations have taken place since then despite repeated requests from the European Commission and the Greek authorities.

The October 2020 European Council agreed to launch a positive EU-Türkiye agenda. Four priority areas were identified: i) improving the functioning of the Customs Union and relaunching discussions on modernising it; ii) migration and support to refugees; iii) high-level dialogues; iv) people-to-people contacts and mobility. The European Council of June 2021 reiterated the EU's readiness to engage with Türkiye in a phased, proportionate and reversible manner to enhance cooperation in a number of areas of common interest, subject to the established conditionalities set out in March 2021 and in previous European Council conclusions. The Joint Communication of 29 November 2023 responded to the invitation by the European Council of 29-30 June 2023 to the High Representative and the Commission to submit a report on the state of play of EU-Türkiye relations. It put forward several proposals to re-invigorate bilateral relations, including in the area of migration management and financial support to refugees and host communities. An EU-Türkiye high-level dialogue on migration and security took place in Ankara in October 2021 and another took place in Brussels in November 2023. The European Commission presented the action plan for the Eastern Mediterranean[7] on 18 October 2023 following the European Council guidelines, with a focus on improving migration management in cooperation with key countries of origin and transit, including Türkiye.

Earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria – February 2023

On 6 February, Türkiye was struck by the strongest earthquakes in the region in more than 100 years, with a very high number of deaths, injuries and material damage. The EU quickly provided support following the earthquakes and organised a donors' conference on 20 March in Brussels to mobilise funds from the international community in support of the people in Türkiye and Syria, through a total of EUR 7 billion in pledges, including for the 1.7 million refugees in the affected areas. Under the EU's earthquake pledge, the Commission adopted two financing decisions on 20 December 2023, mobilising a total of EUR 355.6 million from the allocation of EUR 3 billion in additional refugee assistance agreed for 2021-2023 (see box below).

The first measure, worth EUR 115.6 million, aims to strengthen health and education infrastructure in order to improve accessibility for refugees and host communities affected by the earthquakes. This will be done by means of constructing a minimum of 20 education facilities and 20 primary health centres. The second measure, worth EUR 240 million, aims to

number of arrivals in Cyprus via the Green Line went down by 42% between January and September 2023, compared with the same period in 2022.

[7] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_6014

boost socio-economic support, promote social cohesion and foster infrastructure development in Türkiye.

1.2. The EU response to the crisis and the establishment of the Facility

In answer to the call from EU Member States for significant additional funding to support refugees in Türkiye, the Commission established the Facility for Refugees in Turkey by means of the Commission Decision of 24 November 2015, amended on 10 February 2016[8] and on 14 March and 24 July 2018. The Facility is a mechanism to coordinate the mobilisation of resources made available under both the EU budget and additional contributions from Member States integrated into the EU budget as external assigned revenue. Member States committed politically to provide national contributions as part of the Common Understanding between EU Member States and the European Commission, adopted on 3 February 2016, and updated when the second tranche of the Facility was agreed[9]. The Common Understanding also established a conditionality framework.

On 18 March 2016, the Heads of State and Government of the EU and Türkiye reconfirmed their commitment to implement their Joint action plan and agreed further measures aimed at deepening EU-Türkiye relations and addressing the migration crisis[10]. Türkiye and the EU recognised that further, swift and determined efforts were needed. More specifically, the EU-Turkey Statement called for putting an end to irregular migration from Türkiye to the EU by breaking the business model of the smugglers and offering migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk, and accelerating the Facility's implementation.

For the first tranche of the Facility (2016-2017) a total of EUR 3 billion was allocated[11], and an additional EUR 3 billion was made available for the second tranche (2018-2019), taking the Facility total to EUR 6 billion. Following this meeting, the Commission moved quickly to contract the first projects. By 31 December 2020, the Commission had contracted the full operational allocation of the Facility, and by the end of 2023 over EUR 5.3 billion had been disbursed.

2. The functioning of the Facility

The Facility is a coordination mechanism that allows for the swift, effective and efficient mobilisation of EU assistance to refugees in Türkiye, while ensuring sound financial management. The Facility ensures the optimal mobilisation of existing EU financing

[8] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-action-plan-eastern-mediterranean-migration-2023-10-18_en
[9] https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11329-2018-INIT/en/pdf
[10] http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement/
[11] This EUR 3 billion was made available in addition to EUR 345 million that the Commission already allocated to Türkiye in response to the Syrian refugee crisis before the start of the Facility and was additional to Member States' bilateral aid.

instruments, as humanitarian and/or development assistance, to address the needs of refugees and host communities in a comprehensive and coordinated manner[12].

The Steering Committee of the Facility provides strategic guidance on the priorities, the type of actions to be supported, the amounts to be allocated and the financing instruments to be mobilised and - when appropriate - the conditions related to the implementation of Türkiye's commitments under the EU-Turkey Joint action plan of 29 November 2015 (the 'Joint action plan')[13]. In 2023, the Facility's eighth year of implementation, one Steering Committee meeting took place on 5 July.

The sustainability of Facility projects and co-ownership by the Turkish authorities are important. Priority areas for assistance are identified based on a comprehensive and independent needs assessment, which was updated in 2018.

The Facility coordinates financing from the following external financing instruments[14]: i) humanitarian aid; ii) the European Neighbourhood Instrument; iii) the Development Cooperation Instrument; iv) the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA); and v) the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace. Measures financed by the EU's budget are carried out according to its financial rules and regulations applicable to both direct and indirect management. Implementation of assistance is conditional upon Türkiye being in strict compliance with the undertakings of the Joint action plan and the Statement.

3. Financial capacity, duration and nature of funding

The total budget coordinated by the Facility is EUR 6 billion, mobilised in two tranches. Projects under the first and second tranche run until mid-2025 at the latest, with many projects under the first tranche already completed and most projects scheduled to finish earlier. Exceptionally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation period for projects under the 2016 Special Measure (EUR 1.6 billion) was extended, allowing for all projects concerned to reach their stated objectives.

The first tranche amounted to EUR 3 billion, of which EUR 1 billion was mobilised from the EU budget and EUR 2 billion was provided in bilateral contributions from the Member States. Likewise, the second tranche amounted to EUR 3 billion, of which the EU budget provided EUR 2 billion and the Member States EUR 1 billion[15].

Regarding EU budget resources, of the EUR 1 billion from the EU budget for 2016-2017, EUR 250 million was mobilised in 2016 and EUR 750 million in 2017. Of the EUR 2 billion

[12] Commission Decision C(2015) 9500 of 24.11.2015, Article 2 – Objectives of the Facility.

[13] See Article 5 (1) of Commission Decision C(2015) 9500, as amended by Commission Decision C(2016)855.

[14] The European Neighbourhood Instrument and the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) contributions were respectively transferred to and implemented under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and the EU Trust Fund. In principle, all Facility contributions to the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (from IPA and to a minor extent from DCI) were implemented as non-humanitarian assistance.

[15] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/06/29/facility-for-refugees-in-turkey-member-states-agree-details-of-additional-funding/

from the EU budget for 2018-2019, EUR 550 million was mobilised in 2018, with the balance mobilised in 2019.

As for Member State contributions, for the first tranche, Member States contributed EUR 677 million to the Facility in 2016, EUR 847 million in 2017, EUR 396 million in 2018 and EUR 80 million in 2019. For the second tranche, Member States contributed EUR 68 million in 2018, EUR 202 million in 2019, EUR 265 million in 2020, EUR 166 million in 2021, EUR 165 million in 2022, with the last payments amounting to EUR 134 million in 2023. Member State contributions were made directly to the EU Budget in the form of external assigned revenue[16] and assigned to the budget lines of the IPA and of the humanitarian aid.

A satisfactory match between the rate of Member States' payments of their contributions *into* the Facility and the rate of disbursements financed by those contributions *from* the Facility continues.

Under the humanitarian strand of the Facility, EUR 19.5 million was earmarked as a buffer for possible funding of responses to the influx of new refugees from Syria in 2019. Since the buffer was not used, this amount was contracted in 2020 to cover health and protection actions, completing the programming exercise for the second tranche.

By 31 December 2020, the Commission had contracted the full operational allocation of the Facility. Out of a total of EUR 6 billion, just over EUR 5.3 billion had been disbursed by the end of 2023.

Additional EU assistance to refugees in Türkiye outside the framework of the Facility

In 2020, the Commission allocated an additional EUR 535 million to support humanitarian actions in Türkiye outside the framework of the Facility. This refugee assistance focused on basic needs, protection, education and healthcare and has been fully contracted and disbursed.

This trend continued in 2021. Further to the European Council conclusions of June of that year, the Commission mobilised EUR 3 billion for refugees and host communities in Türkiye for 2021-2023. This funding aims to ensure key Facility interventions continue in the priority areas of humanitarian assistance, basic needs, education and health, as well as migration management and border control. It also includes EUR 150 million under DG HOME instruments primarily in support of resettlement efforts of EU Member States from Türkiye, but also in support of migration management, border management and anti-smuggling efforts. It also includes EUR 14.4 million under a support measure that was adopted in October 2024.

[16] External revenues pursuant to Article 21(2)(b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 (OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p.1) for contributions in 2016 and until 1 August 2018 and pursuant to Article 21(2)(a)(ii) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (OJ L 193, 30.07.2018, p.1).

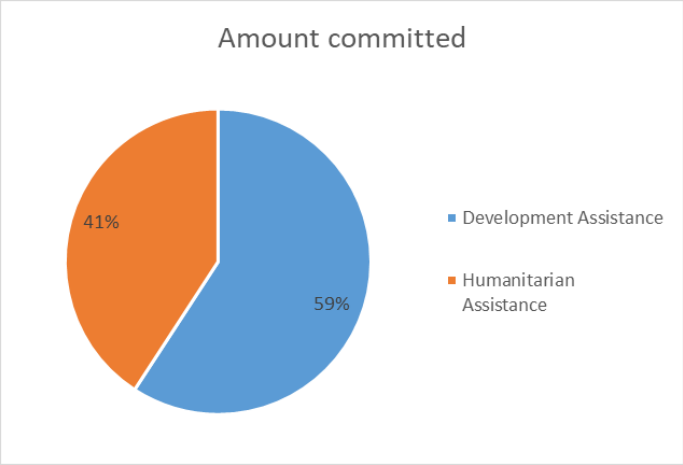
In February 2024, the European Council decided to allocate a further EUR 2 billion to maintain effective migration cooperation, including the support for Syrian refugees in Türkiye until 2027. In addition, in 2024, the Commission allocated EUR 520 million to ensure the continuation of the assistance, plus EUR 480 million transferred from the refugee assistance allocation for 2025.

Total EU assistance allocated to refugees in Türkiye since 2011 amounts to EUR 12.5 billion. This includes EUR 345 million in refugee assistance mobilised between 2011 and 2016, the EUR 6 billion under the Facility, EUR 535 million in bridge funding in 2020, EUR 3 billion in additional funding in 2021-2023, EUR 520 million in 2024 and an additional EUR 2 billion until 2027.

4. Implementation of the Facility

The Facility is implemented in the form of humanitarian and development assistance. Under the first tranche roughly EUR 1.4 billion and EUR 1.6 billion were allocated to the respective strands. Given the protracted nature of the Syria crisis, interventions under the second tranche increasingly focused on socio-economic support activities and creating livelihood opportunities. Under the second tranche, EUR 1.04 billion was allocated to humanitarian assistance, and EUR 1.9 billion to development assistance[17].

For the Facility overall, the breakdown of humanitarian and development assistance is as follows:



For full details, see the online projects table[18].

Assistance provided under the Facility is project-based. Disbursements depend on the progress made in carrying out Facility interventions.

[17] The balance of EUR 60 million is allocated to the administrative and operational support provided for rolling out the Facility.

[18] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/turkiye/eu-support-refugees-turkiye_en

Particular attention is paid to non-Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. Facility interventions always aim to involve the local communities hosting refugees.

Humanitarian assistance under the Facility aims to help the most vulnerable refugees through providing dignified support addressing basic needs and protection. It also addresses gaps through specialised agencies and partners in the sectors of health and education in emergencies. The provision of EU humanitarian aid is guided by the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid of 2007[19], which stipulates that the EU as a humanitarian actor adheres to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, as set out in Article 214 of the TFEU and in the Humanitarian Aid Regulation (No. 1257/96)[20,21].

Under the humanitarian strand of the Facility, a total of 65 projects have been implemented through 21 partners under both the first and the second tranche. These projects cover the response to basic needs, protection, education and health for the most vulnerable refugees in Türkiye. Under the first tranche, around EUR 1.4 billion in humanitarian assistance was allocated and contracted and EUR 1.3 billion was disbursed, while for the second tranche, EUR 1.04 billion was contracted and by 31 January 2023, EUR 1.035 million was disbursed.

Development assistance supports the longer-term needs in the areas of health, education and socio-economic development of refugees, particularly in terms of access to public services and livelihood opportunities, and municipal infrastructure. It also focuses on vulnerable groups and includes a gender aspect in its interventions, e.g. protecting women and girls against sexual and gender-based violence and improving access to sexual and reproductive healthcare.

Under the development strand of the Facility, there continued to be good progress made in implementing 26 projects contracted under the first tranche. Of these projects, 15 were implemented under the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis for a total of EUR 293 million, in addition to the allocation managed directly through the IPA[22].

Disbursements to implementing partners reached nearly EUR 2.9 billion out of a total of EUR 3.5 billion allocated to development assistance under both tranches of the Facility[23]. The development strand of the Facility includes 17 contracts.

In 2023, the Facility's implementation continued to be affected by very high inflation in Türkiye and exchange rate-related challenges. This required a reduction in the scope of some projects, in turn resulting in a decrease in the number of facilities constructed.

[19] Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States.

[20] Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid.

[21] The European Commission's humanitarian aid is based on annual country-specific humanitarian implementation plans. The framework for cooperation between the Commission and its partners in the area of humanitarian aid is established by the Commission's Financial and Administrative Framework Agreements with international organisations and Framework Partnership Agreements with non-governmental organisations.

[22] Funds from the IPA under the Facility are managed according to the rules for external action contained in Title IV of part two of the Financial Regulation and its Rules of Application.

[23] This figure also includes disbursements under projects implemented by the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, but not yet charged to the EU budget.

Facility interventions per priority area

Progress made per priority area in providing assistance financed under both tranches of the Facility is reported on in the twice-yearly Facility monitoring reports[24].

There were significant achievements in providing assistance to refugees and host communities in the following priority areas.

Education

A total of EUR 2 billion has been allocated to education support under the Facility and additional refugee support.

Under the humanitarian strand of the Facility, more than EUR 181 million was allocated to education. The Conditional Cash Transfer in Education (CCTE) supports school enrolment and attendance of refugee children by means of providing monthly payments to refugee families on condition that pupils attend school regularly. The CCTE programme's cash component was funded under the humanitarian strand until October 2022 while capacity support activities for a smooth transition continued until December 2022. The programme was transferred to the development strand in October 2022. In 2023, the CCTE VI programme continued to provide regular cash transfers to the families of around 500 000 children enabling them to attend school.

The implementation of the Facility flagship direct grant (Promoting Inclusive Education for Kids in the Turkish Education System - PIKTES II[25]) by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) of EUR 400 million ended in January 2023. It has been followed up by the new project PIKTES+[26] with a total budget of EUR 300 million funded under additional assistance for refugees in Türkiye.

In education, the overall aim continued to be the integration of all refugee children into the Turkish formal system, complemented by reaching out-of-school children and creating safe pathways to learning, as well as improving learning outcomes. As of September 2023, for the academic year 2023-2024, almost 750 000 refugee children had been enrolled in the formal education system (including preschool) in the 29 most densely refugee-populated provinces targeted by the PIKTES+ programme.

The number of refugee and host community students receiving Facility-supported scholarships to attend technical and vocational education and training (TVET) or higher education institutions has reached 29 049. Most of these students were refugees. Gender balance was maintained.

The Facility has continued to support educational infrastructure development and reduced school overcrowding. There has been significant progress made in the number of educational facilities upgraded and completed. A major achievement in upgrading was the installation of

[24] https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/negotiations-status/turkey/eu-facility-refugees-turkey_en
[25] Promoting Integration of Syrian Kids into the Education System II (PIKTES II).
[26] Promoting Inclusive Education for Kids in the Turkish Education System" (PIKTES+).

8 700 smartboards in primary and secondary schools. To date, over 12 000 facilities have been upgraded with Facility support.

In addition, under the Education for All in Times of Crisis and Education Infrastructure for Resilience projects, 175 schools were built and education services started. Moreover, rooftop solar panels installed in schools generate power for 50 schools and energy efficiency improvement measures were completed for 41 schools.

In 2023, the EU allocated EUR 65.6 million to help reconstruct education infrastructure in Türkiye, particularly in the aftermath of the earthquakes of February 2023. This funding aims to increase access to education for both refugees and host communities, specifically by means of constructing a minimum of 20 additional education facilities. Two grant projects worth a total of EUR 20 million provide scholarships and associated services to refugee students and students from host communities pursuing undergraduate/graduate studies. The projects started in January 2023 and should last 3 years.

Protection

A total of EUR 326 million has been allocated to protection support under the Facility and additional refugee support, mainly through projects under the humanitarian strand.

The humanitarian strand of the Facility has supported the registration and verification of refugees, allowing them to regularise their status in Türkiye and helping them access services. In particular, it has supported the registration efforts of Türkiye's Presidency of Migration Management and strengthened its institutional and technical capacity. In addition to stand-alone protection interventions aimed to fill gaps and respond to specific needs and individuals at risk, protection has also been mainstreamed into the other pillars of the humanitarian response strategy (basic needs, health and education). The overall aim is to better address refugees' vulnerabilities, regularise their status and link them to a wider network of public and UN/NGO services. During the reporting period, assistance remained focused on the most vulnerable groups (e.g. seasonal agricultural migrant workers, key refugee groups, etc.). In addition, projects financed through the EU Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis included assistance to community centres receiving refugees and further referring vulnerable refugees to adequate services.

Under the development strand of the Facility, a direct grant to the Ministry of Family and Labour and Social Services of EUR 20 million was contracted at the end of 2020 and the action continued. The project aims to improve the provision of preventive and protective social services to the most vulnerable refugees and host communities. The earthquakes have had a serious negative impact and services have been moved to temporary units. The Ministry of Family and Social Services focused on the earthquake-affected regions and had to postpone the capacity-building activities of the action.

Health

A total of EUR 1 billion has been allocated to healthcare support under the Facility and additional refugee support.

The main pillar of Facility support is an education programme for healthcare providers known as SIHHAT[27], a project funded by three consecutive allocations: EUR 300 million in 2016, EUR 210 million in 2020 and EUR 210 million in 2023. SIHHAT supports the Turkish Ministry of Health in its efforts to provide free and equitable access to healthcare to all refugees. A total of 190 migrant health centres have been operating in 32 provinces and around 4 000 healthcare staff have been working in EU-supported facilities, 75% of whom are of Syrian origin. Due to the earthquakes, there have been losses in healthcare staff and 17 centres were damaged; their services have been moved to temporary health units. The implementation of SIHHAT II ended at the beginning of 2024. SIHHAT III ensures that refugee healthcare services continue thanks to additional EU support of EUR 210 million.

The two hospitals funded under the Facility – Dörtyol/Hatay and Kilis – have been fully operational since 2022 and provided crucial healthcare services following the 2023 earthquakes, when the capacity of both hospitals was increased to 400 beds. In addition, the Facility is building and renovating migrant health centres, procuring medical equipment, and maternity and hygiene kits, and renovating physiotherapy and rehabilitation units, as a complement to SIHHAT. In 2023, the construction of eight health centres started and 113 items of medical equipment have been procured to benefit more than 40 hospitals.

In terms of humanitarian support, two physical rehabilitation centres in Kilis and Reyhanli/Hatay continue to operate and provide services such as physiotherapy, mental health and psychosocial support for refugees with disabilities and other vulnerabilities.

Municipal infrastructure

A total of EUR 380 million has been allocated to municipal infrastructure support under the Facility and additional refugee support.

The Facility supports various municipalities by providing essential municipal services, including water supply, sanitation, and solid waste management. It also supports local infrastructure by providing recreational services. As for the recreational facilities, 12 facilities (football and tennis courts) have been completed while 10 sports complexes are currently being built. In 2023, the construction of water and wastewater projects started in the provinces of Kilis, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Mersin, Mardin, Adıyaman, Malatya and Hatay.

Basic needs and socio-economic support

A total of EUR 3.7 billion has been allocated to basic needs and socio-economic support under the Facility and additional refugee support.

Interventions in this priority area aim to help meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable refugees and ensure that refugee resilience and self-reliance are strengthened. This should allow for a gradual transition from dependence on social assistance to increased self-reliance and livelihood opportunities.

Under the Facility's basic needs assistance, more than 2.6 million refugees have received direct support that allows them to live in dignity. Until July 2023, most of the support was provided through the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), a social assistance programme

delivering monthly cash assistance via a debit card system to more than 1.6 million refugee beneficiaries. In July 2023, the new cash assistance programme 'Social Safety Net for Refugees in Türkiye (SSN)' (EUR 781 million) was signed with the Ministry of Family and Social Services. This intervention marks the transition of the ESSN from humanitarian aid to longer-term development assistance.

Under the second tranche of the Facility, the implementation of the EUR 245 million direct grant with the Ministry of Family and Social Services has been almost completed. This grant allows for the provision of monthly financial support comparable with social assistance provided to vulnerable individuals under the Turkish social security system, i.e. the Complementary ESSN (C-ESSN). The project began running in parallel with the ESSN and provides support to households with single parents, older people, and disabled and severely disabled people. In 2023, the continuity of the C-ESSN and ESSN[28] programmes was assured under the EUR 3 billion in additional refugee support mobilised for 2021-2023[29]. Both programmes have since been merged into the single contract SSN.

Additional socio-economic support continues to be provided to refugees who can access the labour market. This support aims to increase refugee and host communities' employability. It provides vocational and skills training, language training, job counselling, and on-the-job training programmes, as well as simplifies the refugees' work permits process. This support is implemented under the Employment Support project and Transition to Labour Market projects (ISDEP I and ISDEP II), both implemented by the World Bank, in cooperation with the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) together with the Directorate-General of International Labour Force (DG ILF) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS). Grants to entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship training are provided to both Syrian refugee and host community start-ups and existing entrepreneurs, in cooperation with the Small and Medium-sized Industry Development Organisation of Türkiye (KOSGEB) and the Turkish Development and Investment Bank (TKYB), as well as under the ENHANCER project, implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and Technology.

An additional project helps develop and implement a female-led social entrepreneurship model to provide sustainable income-generating activities for both vulnerable Syrian refugees and Turkish women. Two further projects aim to support employment in agriculture. Moreover, a project implemented by Expertise France (EF) in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education – Directorate-General of Technical and vocational education and training (MoNE- DG TVET) focused on working children and child labour and referred them to formal apprenticeship education. MoNE-DG TVET also cooperated with Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau Development Bank (KfW) to implement another project on formal vocational

[28] It is planned that the next phase of ESSN programme will be taken over by DG NEAR.

[29] *Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the individual measure for the delivery of cash support to the most vulnerable refugees in Türkiye for 2022 and 2023 - C(2022) 7822 final* – was adopted on 4.1.2022 and *Commission Implementation Decision on the financing of the individual measure to continue support for basic needs and transition to livelihoods opportunities for refugees in Türkiye in 2022 - C(2022) 8887* – was adopted on 7.12.2022.

education to support the young graduates entering the labour market by placing them into jobs. Projects should run until mid/end of 2025 at the latest.

In 2022 and 2023, the continuity of socio-economic support to refugees was assured under the EUR 3 billion of additional refugee support mobilised in 2021-2023. In December 2023, three additional livelihood contracts with pillar-assessed entities were signed. Also in 2023, EUR 182.5 million was programmed for socio-economic support given the needs in this priority area following the February 2023 earthquakes (see also above).

Migration management

A total of EUR 480 million has been allocated to migration management support under the Facility and additional refugee support[30].

Two projects funded under the first tranche for a total of EUR 80 million have been completed. The first project provided EU support to strengthen the search and rescue capacity of the Turkish coastguard, and the second aimed to support Türkiye's Presidency for Migration Management (PMM)[31] in its management of returns from the EU.

Three new actions began under the additional support to refugees with a total budget of EUR 30 million. One of these projects, started in May 2023, continues the strengthening of the PMM. A capacity-building project on migration management started in February 2023 while a capacity-building project aiming to improve capacity and inter-agency cooperation at airports started in March 2023. In addition, EUR 220 million was allocated to strengthen Türkiye's border management capacity in the east and south-east.

Gender aspects within projects under the Facility

The EU Gender action plan III 'Together towards a gender equal world 2021-2025' continues to guide the implementation of actions under the Facility. The promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights for women and girls in all their diversity, gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment remained priorities in 2023. Gender-related considerations were integrated into all Facility projects and have been continuously monitored through disaggregated data (76 indicators).

The Facility significantly boosted women's employability, with over 26 000 completing short-term vocational skills training, around 40 000 benefiting from employment counselling services, and 500 women-owned businesses receiving advisory or financial support. The Facility has provided Turkish language courses to refugee women, with approximately 25 000 adult refugee women and 20 000 female students successfully completing them. Furthermore, approximately 55 000 female refugee children have attended pre-primary education made available through the Facility-funded projects, with 15 000 female students receiving educational scholarships. In particular, nearly 50% of the teachers and educational staff engaged by the Facility are women. Cash transfer programmes equally benefits over 1 million refugee women, and with regular unconditional resource transfers. Moreover, around 400 000 families of female students have received conditional cash for education support. Separate

[30] This excludes EUR 150 million allocated under HOME instruments.
[31] Then called Directorate-General for Migration Management (DGMM).

from cash transfer programmes, about 500 000 refugee women have received protection referral services, while approximately 550 000 refugee women have benefited from protection services through Facility-funded projects.

5. Monitoring, evaluation and audit

In 2023, reporting on Facility achievements continued to be based on the Facility Results Framework[32] and the Theory of Change[33]. The latest Facility monitoring report was published in December 2023 and can be accessed on the DG NEAR website[34].

The Commission continues to be supported by a technical assistance team (SUMAF[35]) in its Facility monitoring and reporting tasks. By the end of 2023, the SUMAF team has completed 114 monitoring missions. In addition, 12 on-the-spot checks/monitoring missions were carried out for refugee assistance projects[36]. Facility actions financed under the humanitarian implementation plans also continued to be monitored, with 89 project-level monitoring missions completed in the reporting period.

The European Court of Auditors conducted its second performance audit of the Facility in 2022-2023. The audit report, including the Court's findings and recommendations, and the Commission's replies, was published on 24 April 2024 and is available online.

6. Communication and visibility

In 2023, activities continued to strengthen the visibility of the Facility's actions and raise the profile of the EU in assisting Türkiye in hosting the refugee population. Priorities included ensuring awareness, visibility and understanding among the general public, the media, policymakers and other stakeholders within the EU, Türkiye and the international community. Facility communication activities were temporarily scaled down in the months before and during the May parliamentary and presidential elections due to a sharp increase of negative official rhetoric and public sentiment towards the refugees during this period.

In February-June, communication activities focused on the EU response to and assistance after the devastating earthquakes, which disrupted the lives of millions of refugees and host communities. As a result, the EU's role was acknowledged by two thirds of the population (according to a June opinion poll). It also helped mitigate some of the negative rhetoric in the

[32] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/Facility%20Results%20Framework_Jun2022.pdf
[33] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/99c1bfa3-1853-42ff-ae3b-59622f7bdab1_en?filename=EU%20support%20to%20refugees%20in%20TR_Theory%20of%20Change%202024.pdf
[34] https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/negotiations-status/turkey/eu-facility-refugees-turkey_en
[35] Technical Assistance to Support the monitoring of Actions financed under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey – IPA/2018/393-877.
[36] Cumulative figures from 2017.

run-up to the elections. Europe Day in May in Ankara featured a digital exhibition on the EU rescue effort after the earthquakes, which helped promote EU narratives about refugees. Several photos and videos were also used during public events in May in Brussels. In the autumn, the production of the photo album dedicated to the rescue effort was launched in close cooperation with EU Member State embassies. The project was completed in February 2024 and is to be the centrepiece of a series of communication events during the year.

The Head of EU Delegation in Türkiye carried out several visits to the earthquake areas throughout the year, raising the visibility of EU projects for refugees and host communities, including a major press trip to the earthquake-affected areas in and around Urfa. The Head of Delegation also visited Brussels three times accompanied by groups of Turkish journalists, including a visit to the international donors' conference in March, helping to increase awareness, visibility and understanding of EU support to refugees. The visits of Commissioner Lenarčič in February and Commissioner Várhelyi in February and September enabled EU messages on refugees and host communities to be delivered to broad audiences and included a signing ceremony and press release on the extension of EU basic needs support in September.

In May 2023, the EU Delegation in Ankara launched a success stories project that included several stories from projects financed under the Facility. These were posted on the Delegation's website, advertised on social media accounts and shared with the media and other stakeholders.

7. Conclusion and next steps

The Facility continued to be implemented quickly in 2023. The full operational budget of the Facility was contracted and EUR 5.3 billion disbursed. The Facility continued to provide much needed assistance to refugees and host communities in Türkiye. Additional refugee assistance allocated for 2020-2027 aims to ensure the sustainability of Facility achievements.

The **next steps** include:

- *continuing effective implementation of all projects to benefit refugees and host communities, in line with the principles of sound financial management;*
- *continuing the roll-out of Facility-related communication activities;*
- *organising a Facility Steering Committee in spring 2025;*
- *programming additional support to refugees and host communities in Türkiye to ensure the sustainability of Facility achievements; and*
- *starting a debate with Member States, the European Parliament and Türkiye on the recommendations of the European Court of Auditors second operational audit of the Facility.*