Questions and answers: Support for refugees in Turkey through the Emergency Social Safety Net

Brussels, 31 October 2019

On 31 October 2019, the European Union announced €600 million to ensure the continuation of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) in Turkey. Already around 1.7 million of the most vulnerable refugees are able to meet their basic needs by receiving monthly cash-transfers thanks to this programme.

The ESSN was launched in 2016 and is financed with €1.725 billion by the European Union and its Member States under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. It is the largest-ever humanitarian aid programme financed by the EU.

How does the ESSN work in practice?

Registered refugees enrolled in the programme receive a special debit card which they can use to purchase goods and services, only within Turkey. Compared to giving out aid in the form of handouts, the debit card is an efficient way to support families to purchase what they most need, providing them with the dignity of choice. The programme is designed to provide financial assistance to vulnerable refugees in Turkey to help them meet their basic needs. The ESSN card can be used in shops or ATM just like a normal debit card. The assistance is mostly utilized to cover the costs of food, rent and medicine. As the money is spent by refugees locally, it also boosts the local economy.

How much money is given per refugee through the ESSN?

The amount corresponds to the needs of the most vulnerable families. It is based on a thorough assessment undertaken by EU humanitarian partners and was agreed with the Turkish authorities. The value is currently 120 Turkish Lira (around €19) per family member per month, with additional quarterly top-ups based on family size, with special payments to families with members who require specialised care.

How do you choose who gets a cash card and who doesn’t?

Humanitarian assistance under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey is implemented according to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. The ESSN uses demographic targeting criteria, focusing on the most vulnerable households, with a focus on single-parent households, the elderly, the disabled, large families, unaccompanied minors, and other vulnerable groups.

How is funding monitored?

The implementation of the ESSN is monitored closely by the Steering Committee of the Facility, which is composed of representatives of all EU Member States, the European Commission and of Turkey as an observer. Furthermore, staff of the EU's humanitarian aid office in Turkey regularly monitor the project.

The assistance is provided only through our humanitarian partners and the beneficiaries of each card are known and there are no anonymous debit cards.

The identity of the card-holder is verified monthly by a physical check and the card is blocked if an attempt to use it outside the country is made or if the monthly check does not confirm the presence of the card-holder.

Who is implementing the ESSN programme?

Until now, the United Nations World Food Programme, in partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent, is implementing the ESSN programme. The WFP designed, rolled out and implemented the biggest cash-based programme ever and the EU is very pleased with this partnership and the results achieved. As of 1 April 2020, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent, will now take over the implementation of the ESSN programme.

Is the European Commission transferring humanitarian aid funds directly to the Turkish government?
No. EU humanitarian aid is only provided to humanitarian organisations: UN agencies, international organisations and non-governmental organisations, and never through Governments.

Close cooperation with the Turkish authorities is of course part of the humanitarian response to ensure effectiveness. The ESSN programme has been developed and is implemented in close partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent and the Turkish authorities.

**How much money is available under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey?**

The Facility has an overall budget of €6 billion for 2016-2019. Out of this amount, €2.4 billion are for humanitarian projects, while €4.2 billion are for longer term development support. Of this funding, €3.5 billion have to date been contracted for both humanitarian and non-humanitarian projects under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

**What other humanitarian assistance does the EU provide to refugees in Turkey?**

In addition to covering the basic needs of the refugees via the ESSN programme, the EU funds a variety of programmes helping refugees.

Projects include the EU's flagship education project which has provided €104 million to vulnerable refugee families whose children attend school regularly under the 'Conditional Cash Transfers for Education' (CCTE). More than half a million children who attended school regularly have benefitted from this programme.

A number of other humanitarian aid projects address protection, including legal counselling, psychosocial support, and access to civil documentation, as well as specialised healthcare services. Thanks to EU funding, humanitarian partner organisations have, for example, provided over 1 million healthcare consultations to refugees in Turkey.

**For More Information**


Factsheet: [The Facility for Refugees in Turkey](https://ec.europa.eu/rapid/PressReleaseTextDisplay.cfm?PressReleasesID=44007)

Factsheet: [EU humanitarian support in Turkey](https://ec.europa.eu/rapid/PressReleaseTextDisplay.cfm?PressReleasesID=44008)

Website: [Christos Stylianides](https://ec.europa.eu/ Rapid/PressReleaseTextDisplay.cfm?PressReleasesID=44009), Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid & Crisis Management