



Strategic Mid-term Evaluation of the

Facility for Refugees in Turkey

2016-2019/2020

Prepared by



Executive Summary

The Facility for Refugees in Turkey (the Facility) is a EUR 6 billion mechanism designed to share Turkey's burden of hosting close to four million refugees. Organised in two tranches, it coordinates the EU refugee response, focusing on humanitarian assistance and protection, education, health, socio-economic support and migration management.

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

This strategic mid-term evaluation of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey is governed by Commission Decision C (2015)9500, which requires the European Commission (EC) to carry out an evaluation of the first tranche of the Facility by 31st December 2021, in full coordination with Member States¹. The purpose of the evaluation is:

- to provide an overall assessment of the performance of the Facility to date, focusing on intermediate results measured against its objectives; and
- to provide lessons learned and actionable recommendations to improve current and future actions and strategy.

The evaluation covers the conception, design and implementation period of the first tranche, from its inception in late 2015 up to early 2021 when this evaluation was finalised. It also includes subsidiary analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on refugees in Turkey. Recommendations are forward-looking and, given the strategic nature of the exercise, do not confine themselves narrowly to the period of the first tranche.

Context

The year of publication for this evaluation sadly marks a decade of civil war in Syria. The impact on the region and Syria's neighbours has been profound; Turkey has become the largest host of refugees worldwide during that period. The Turkish approach to hosting refugees has been generous and progressive. Refugees can access health care and education, and enjoy significant freedom of movement. In support of this progressive policy, the European Union has mounted one of its largest ever programmes of refugee support including the largest ever unconditional humanitarian cash transfer programme, as well as support to government provision of the aforementioned services. Since 2011, Turkey has experienced both political and economic turbulence, with the economic impact of the global pandemic likely to be significant. Throughout this period, and despite often delicate political relations between the EU and Turkey, the EU's support for refugees has been unwavering.

1 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/c_2018_1500_f1_commission_decision_en_v11_p1_968650.pdf

Methodology

The evaluation is theory based, drawing heavily on standard practice within the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). The evaluation was conducted in four phases and used four wide ranging sector studies as the principal evidence base. The evaluation gathered primary qualitative and quantitative data, and reviewed and analysed existing data, including through an exhaustive study of available documentation and literature. In total, 557 key informant interviews took place; an online survey of 365 beneficiaries was conducted; existing household data from the *Emergency Social Safety Net* (ESSN) programme was analysed, including qualitative interviews that were re-analysed; and the team gathered information from social media. Analysis of the data used a mix of adapted contribution analysis for the sector studies, and mixed methods analysis for the strategic questions (via the evaluation matrix and sub-components). All evidence was coded according to the evaluation questions, using research software, and standard statistical methods were used for quantitative data sets. The findings were extensively triangulated and validated via a series of workshops, feedback sessions and stress testing.

The evaluation faced two significant challenges. The first round of field work was interrupted by the COVID-19 global pandemic, resulting in all subsequent data collection being conducted remotely. This was mitigated via innovative data collection methods. The second challenge was a lack of available outcome data. A good range of proxy data was found via other sources, although sometimes this was less than ideal.

Key findings

The Facility for Refugees in Turkey (the Facility) has made a truly bold and significant contribution to the welfare of Syrians and others fleeing conflict in the region. It has also been a symbol of solidarity and support for the Turkish state and people who have so generously hosted the largest number of refugees in the world.

This evaluation has found that the Facility was unprecedented in its scale and reach and was mobilised quickly once the Member States and Turkey had reached a common understanding. Member States are emphatic in their support for the Facility. Its size and scale allowed the European Union to have an impact that would not have been possible for Member States alone (or for the Commission alone, without the additional contributions of Member States).

At the end of its first tranche, the Facility was routinely providing for the basic needs of 1.75 million refugees via the ESSN. This is the major contribution to sustaining the livelihoods of refugees in Turkey and to social cohesion, and there is reliable data that it has prevented economic deterioration and negative coping strategies. The Facility has also made major contributions to the Government's provision of health care and education to refugees, supporting the state to reach scale faster than it might have otherwise.

In both areas, Facility funding has supported the integration of refugees into the Government system. Barriers to education were addressed through measures such as catch-up and back-up classes, Turkish language classes and the highly regarded *Conditional Cash Transfer for Education* (CCTE), and additional primary health care capacity was created through investment in clinics and staff.

Refugees report being very satisfied with the services provided, particularly under the ESSN, but also in education and health. Ninety percent of households surveyed in early 2020 reported that there are no other services that they need but cannot access (in addition to health care, education and the ESSN).

The Facility also invested significantly in refugee protection, primarily through support to the new Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) and UNHCR for registration. Registration unlocks access to services and legal protection, and the high percentage of registrations (after the second year over 90%) is a major success. The Facility also supported specialised protection services and outreach measures.

Whilst health care coverage and education attendance are high, and despite major progress on enrolment, there are still 400,000 children out of school. While Facility support has been good, there are barriers that continue to limit access to health care provision. In the complex area of mental health, the refugees' needs have not yet been fully addressed.

Furthermore, the declining value of the Turkish lira and, most recently, the COVID-19 crisis, have jeopardised earlier gains in household income. Some vulnerable people have missed out on the ESSN benefit as a result of the demographic targeting criteria. These were put in place to enable rapid scale-up but meant that some who almost certainly should have received the cash transfer did not. A number of subsequent measures have sought to rectify this, but have not entirely resolved the issue.

Perhaps the most significant exclusions from both Facility and Turkish assistance, however, are for refugees who do not stay in their province of registration. Refugees are required to stay in their province of registration to qualify for services, but many have moved to find work. The ESSN was not designed to cover all basic needs, rather to provide a top-up, and some 70% of household income is derived from working. With limited access to the formal job market (it is permitted but there are not enough jobs and significant barriers to entry), most refugees work informally in the larger cities. Border provinces where most refugees are registered do not have the jobs, so refugees are faced with either moving for work, or staying for services. This has led to a significant group of 'out-of-province' refugees excluded from Facility and government assistance. Seasonal agricultural workers also fall into this category and, since late 2019, non-Syrian refugees do not qualify for free health care after a year in the country (with some exceptions for the most vulnerable). Tackling these exclusions in a sensitive and politically acceptable way is a major challenge for Turkey, and an area in which the EU should provide further support.

The Facility has become a model in the way that it has combined humanitarian and development assistance, and how it has worked with the Government. It has been a rapid and effective response, but in some senses has not been able to evolve. The set-up as a coordination mechanism of existing instruments allowed for the fast scale-up already noted. A small secretariat provided agility, but the strategic and governance arrangements have been limiting. The areas of intervention were defined early, at the outset of the Facility, leaving little room for major re-orientation.

The Facility has also been constrained by the implementation modalities available to it, although it has done well within these parameters. Implementation modalities for one of the key financing instruments used, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), were set down early in the design of the Facility, using direct and indirect management. Direct management is a demanding tool and government counterpart ministries feel the process is challenging. The evaluation recognises that direct management provides excellent oversight, and there were no other options available for the type of assistance required. However, the Commission should reflect on whether such modalities are appropriate in refugee and crisis contexts.

The evaluation has found that there was good adherence to Commission policies within the Facility, and much of the response constitutes best practice. In particular Turkey represents an excellent example of the *Lives in Dignity* communication, although this was approved after the Facility was established. Whilst there was good alignment with the gender policies of the EC, the evaluation finds that a Facility specific gender strategy would have been appropriate given the scale of the programme. This remains a priority, as does a more coherent vision of how host communities can be best supported.

Transition planning between emergency and development channels accelerated after the European Court of Auditors report of 2018. However, uncertainty about the duration and size of future EU support has hindered new planning. Education and health services are largely unaffected by this uncertainty as the Government has pledged to provide these services regardless of external help. However, for programmes wholly supported by the EU, such as the ESSN and the CCTE, the future is much less clear. A direct grant with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS) in the second tranche of the Facility provides a partial way forward, but not at the scale of ESSN. The ESSN has been critical for stability and remains so in difficult economic times. Refugee protection interventions must also continue, given the ongoing needs of some particularly vulnerable groups.

Two elements of the Facility portfolio that have not progressed as fast or effectively as hoped are construction, and work in the socio-economic sector. The reasons for both these delays are well understood, and the evaluation makes some recommendations on how socio-economic work in particular might be re-focused.

Overall assessment

The Facility was unprecedented in scale and reach, and was mobilised quickly, largely meeting the needs of refugees. It made a major contribution to the basic needs of refugees, and enabled a faster government scale-up of health and education services than would have otherwise been the case. The Facility worked well with its government partners, despite sometimes challenging modalities, and has demonstrated practical support and solidarity with refugees in Turkey. Whilst the transition from emergency to development was largely smooth, the uncertainty about future funding has compromised ability to plan effectively. This should be resolved early.

Conclusions

1. The Facility was unprecedented in scale and reach, and was mobilised quickly.
2. The Facility largely met the needs of refugees, and was targeted relatively effectively.
3. The Facility is a model for refugee operations, combining humanitarian and development assistance well.
4. The Facility partnered well with Turkey, contributing additional capacity.
5. The Facility was largely coherent with key EU policies.
6. The Facility set-up enabled rapid scale-up, but has not been optimal for strategic coherence.
7. The Facility approach to host communities and some key groups has been uneven, and there is more work to be done to reach some of those least likely to access assistance.
8. The Facility was constrained by the modalities available to it.
9. Monitoring has improved through the lifetime of the Facility, and is sometimes used to strengthen programming.
10. Support for economic opportunities has been the least developed intervention so far, and construction has been delayed.

Recommendations

The evaluation makes the following recommendations to the European Commission, which are to be implemented in close cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Turkey.

Cluster 1

Reach (coverage, targeting and marginal groups)

1. Increase access to services for underserved refugees.
2. Mitigate the impact of increasing social tensions for refugees in Turkey.
3. Develop a specific gender strategy for future EU support to refugees in Turkey, drawing on the GAP III and other EC gender frameworks.

Cluster 2

Strategy (strategy and joint working)

4. If future EU funding for refugees in Turkey is made available, update the *strategic concept note* based on this evaluation and other analysis and focus future funding on measures that facilitate a gradual transition from EU assistance to Turkish support.
5. Re-design the strategic governance of any future external funding for refugees, based on lessons to date. In the event that externally assigned revenues are mobilised, re-orient the current Steering Committee toward oversight and encourage Member State involvement in working level structures.

Cluster 3

Management (structure, partnerships, modalities and M&E)

6. Review the Facility implementation structure with the aim of optimising management and reporting lines and boosting on-the-ground capacity, including in key provinces, if future EU funding for refugees in Turkey is made available.
7. Strengthen the system of data collection, analysis and outcome measurement, in order to inform strategic decision-making and accountability.

Cluster 4

Strategic recommendations for each sector

8. Increase the focus on refugee student integration into the classroom.
9. Integrate migrant health care into the mainstream health system.
10. Continue cash support to meet basic needs, with increased focus on the most vulnerable refugees, and in line with similar support to Turkish citizens.
11. Overhaul economic support programmes to match current economic and labour market realities.
12. Strengthen the mainstreaming of protection across the Facility response.