



European
Commission



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European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Türkiye

Introduction

In February 2023, an earthquake of 7.8 magnitude followed by another powerful 7.5-magnitude earthquake and several aftershocks caused massive destruction and suffering in Türkiye.

The country currently hosts the largest refugee population in the world, with close to 4 million people. Most refugees in Türkiye live outside camps, with growing but limited access to basic services.

In close cooperation with the Turkish authorities, the EU continues to assist the most vulnerable people in Türkiye based on their humanitarian needs. Since 2015, the EU has supported nearly 100 humanitarian projects contracted with over 20 partner organisations.

What are the needs?

On 6 February 2023, an earthquake of 7.8 magnitude – one of the strongest earthquakes in the region in more than 100 years – struck the southeast of Türkiye, close to the border with Syria.

It was followed by another powerful 7.5-magnitude earthquake on the same day. According to the Government of Türkiye, over 48,000 people have died, and more than 230,000 buildings have been damaged or destroyed.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at least 9.1 million people in the 11 hardest-hit provinces are likely to have been directly impacted. The most pressing needs remain shelter, food assistance, and water, sanitation and hygiene.

Access to trauma care and rehabilitative care is also crucial for earthquake survivors, along with access to psychosocial support. As many health facilities have been damaged and services are disrupted, essential medicines, access to safe deliveries and post-natal care also remain major needs.

Türkiye hosts 3.5 million Syrian refugees who fled the ongoing conflict ravaging their country for 12 years. According to the UN Refugee Agency, over 98% of refugees in Türkiye live outside camps under challenging and often precarious circumstances.

The country is making commendable efforts to provide registered refugees access to basic rights and services, including education and health care. The cost of living and lack of access to a regular income makes it difficult for vulnerable families to meet their basic needs.

Some refugees feel they have no choice but to resort to negative coping mechanisms such as child labour, street begging, or early marriage. Many families reduce their food consumption or live in substandard housing.

How are we helping?

Earthquakes

Following the devastating earthquakes in February 2023, 1,750 rescuers and 111 search dogs were immediately deployed via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

In addition, 20 EU Member States and Montenegro offered assistance, including shelter equipment, heaters, generators, furniture, medical equipment, hygiene kits, food, and warm clothing for the population in Türkiye.

Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Albania also deployed medical teams, including 5 field hospitals, and the Netherlands deployed a medical evacuation plane via the Mechanism.

Some 2,000 tents, 8,000 beds and 500 relief-housing units equipped with 2,500 beds were mobilised via the rescEU reserves in Romania and Sweden.

To respond to the immediate consequences of the earthquake, the EU also allocated an initial €3.2 million in humanitarian funding. In addition, €5.4 million was reallocated from ongoing projects in Türkiye.

EU humanitarian work in the country

The EU continues to fund humanitarian projects in Türkiye to help vulnerable refugees and their host communities receive the support they need, in close coordination with the Turkish authorities.

Under the EU Facility for Refugees in Türkiye, the EU invested €2.4 billion in humanitarian assistance between 2016-2019 to assist the country in supporting refugees.

In addition to projects funded via the Facility, the EU allocated €32.5 million in humanitarian funding between 2012 and 2014, and €956.7 million from 2020 to 2022.

The EU's flagship humanitarian programme in Türkiye, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), helps the refugee population meet their daily needs through cash assistance.

Since 2016, humanitarian organisations – in collaboration with the Turkish Red Crescent and Turkish government institutions – have been helping refugee families to buy what they need most via EU-funded debit cards.

The ESSN is the single largest humanitarian programme in the history of the EU and currently assists nearly 1.6 million people. In addition, over 370,000 particularly vulnerable refugees receive cash assistance from the development part of the EU Facility for Refugees in Türkiye.

The EU is also committed to providing access to education for refugee children. The Support for School Enrolment (SSE) programme aims to help over 70,000 refugee children enrol in formal and non-formal education by the end of 2023. Where necessary, children and families are also provided with transportation, translation, and further support to ensure children's enrolment in educational opportunities.

These programmes are complemented by other humanitarian aid projects addressing protection issues, including legal counselling, psychosocial support, access to civil documentation, and specialised healthcare services.

Türkiye has also been a participating state of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism since 2005. Established in 2001, the Mechanism aims to strengthen the cooperation between the EU Member States and 8 participating states on civil protection to improve prevention, preparedness, and disaster response together.

Facts & figures

Close to **4 million** refugees in Türkiye (Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Interior)

EU humanitarian funding in Türkiye:

€956.7 million 2020-2022

€2.4 billion between 2016-2019 (EU Facility for Refugees)

€32.5 million for 2012-2014