



Evaluation of the European Union's Humanitarian Response to the refugee crisis in Turkey

Final Report

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Response to the refugee crisis in Turkey**

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**Evaluation of the European Union's Humanitarian Response
To the refugee crisis in Turkey**

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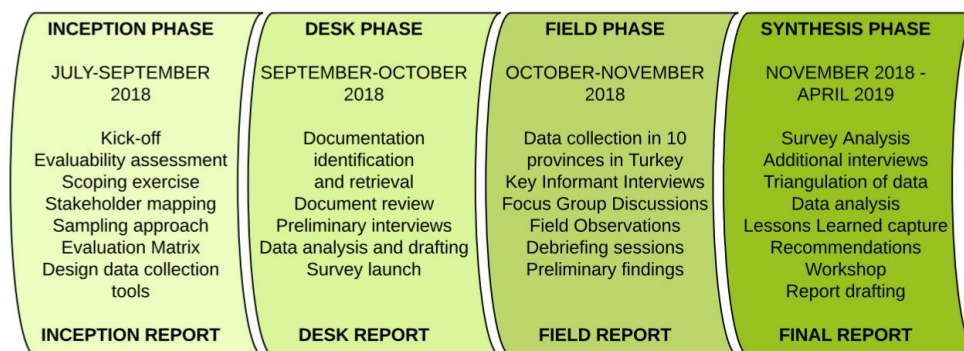
Executive summary

This evaluation, commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), covers all humanitarian aid actions under the European Union (EU) Facility for Refugees in Turkey (the Facility) during the period 2016-2017. The Facility is a coordination mechanism for the mobilisation of EU resources – both from the EU budget and from Member States – to assist Turkey in addressing the needs of refugees and host communities.

The evaluation examines the relevance, coherence, added value, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability¹ of DG ECHO's actions in Turkey. It also (1) provides a strategic assessment of how DG ECHO-supported services for refugees can be handed over to government institutions and/or development actors; (2) provides a structured and comprehensive retrospective assessment of DG ECHO's support for refugees in Turkey from an accountability perspective; and (3) includes elements of a real-time evaluation that provides feedback for immediate use, in particular regarding the second phase of the Facility.

Methodology

The evaluation was conducted between July 2018 and April 2019. It used a combination of research methods, including qualitative primary data collection (key informant interviews, focus group discussions with refugees, workshops with DG ECHO staff, an online survey and field observations) with secondary data collection (document review, stakeholder mapping, and extraction of quantitative data from government and partner sources). A total of 286 key stakeholders were interviewed and a further 363 stakeholders were consulted during focus group discussions. Over 280 documents were reviewed in total. The evaluation was divided into four phases, each with its own deliverable (see graphic).



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Context and DG ECHO support

Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, with 3.65 million Syrians registered by the Government of Turkey. Approximately 80% of Syrians are registered in ten provinces, of which the majority are in Istanbul, Sanliurfa, Hatay and Gaziantep. Turkey also hosts 368,200 non-Syrian asylum-seekers, mainly from Afghanistan (172,000), Iraq (142,000), Iran (39,000), and Somalia (6,700). Finally, there is an unknown number of people with irregular status, estimated between 250,000 and 1,000,000, mostly assumed to be Syrians.

Building upon previous cooperation mechanisms and instruments, in 2015 the European Union (EU) and its Member States decided to increase their cooperation with Turkey, including accelerated financial support, in response to the refugee crisis. The current cooperation between the EU and Turkey is framed by the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan of 15 October 2015, that was activated by the EU-Turkey

¹ The evaluation criteria were: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, as described in the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, and EU added value (<https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>)

Joint Statement of 29 November 2015. The EU immediately established the ‘Facility for Refugees in Turkey’ through a Common Understanding published on 5 February 2016, and the EU-Turkey Joint Statement was updated on 18 March 2016.

The first tranche of funding coordinated by the Facility consisted of EUR 3 billion (EUR 1 billion from the EU budget and EUR 2 billion from Member States), which was fully contracted by the end of 2017, and has an implementation deadline of 2021. A second tranche of EUR 3 billion (EUR 2 billion from the EU budget and EUR 1 billion from Member States) was mobilised in July 2018, to be committed by the end of 2019 and fully implemented by 2025. In the first tranche, EUR 1.4 billion was allocated to humanitarian aid, managed by DG ECHO. This is the financial support covered by this evaluation.

Evaluation findings and overall conclusions

Relevance: did DG ECHO reach the refugees most in need, and adapt to changing Turkish policies and capacities?	
Finding 1	The design and implementation of DG ECHO-funded interventions generally took into account the needs of refugees in Turkey, but the major initiatives could not assess vulnerability at the household level (see Finding 13).
Finding 2	Projects working with United Nations (UN) agencies that were partnered with government ministries had the greatest reach. However, they rarely addressed the needs of unregistered or out-of-province refugees. Projects with Government ministries did, to some extent, assess the vulnerabilities of registered refugees.
Finding 3	Projects working with non-government partners addressed the needs of some unregistered and out-of-province refugees, and were well equipped to assess specific protection vulnerabilities. However, due to regulatory and resource limitations, they were limited in reach, and less able to assure follow-up action.
Finding 4	DG ECHO and its partners have completely transformed their approaches as the Government of Turkey has assumed the central role in the provision of services to registered refugees in all sectors.
<p>Overall conclusions: Working mainly through Government systems was the best way to proceed under the conditions, and has allowed DG ECHO to reach a very large number of refugees in a very efficient manner. However, it has also led to three constraints. The first is that DG ECHO is largely reliant upon Government sources for the data required to plan, monitor and measure programme results – and the available data is not sufficiently detailed or available to meet all of DG ECHO’s needs, despite continuous advocacy to obtain more granular data. Secondly, due largely to Government regulations, DG ECHO’s Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) partners have not been able to assess household needs in order to target specific vulnerabilities. Finally, despite substantial support to partners providing services directly (as a complement to the large programmes using government systems), DG ECHO has not been able to ensure full service coverage to a significant portion of the refugee population which is either unregistered, or registered and living outside its provinces of registration.</p>	

Coherence: was DG ECHO aligned with its own policies and country plans, and aligned with the plans of other EU agencies and the United Nations?	
Finding 5	DG ECHO’s response in all sectors was aligned with DG ECHO’s annual strategies outlined in the Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs) and with the Management

	Framework that guided DG ECHO's work in Turkey overall, although projects approved under one HIP often continued into the period covered by the following HIP.
Finding 6	DG ECHO's operations in Turkey were mostly aligned with DG ECHO's sector policies, but there was room for improvement regarding mainstreaming of Gender in Humanitarian Aid.
Finding 7	Initial coordination between DG ECHO and the European Commission's Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) did not allow systematic streamlining and complementarity of assistance. However, coordination has become stronger at the strategic level, as both services have rallied behind the shared goals of the Facility. Transition discussions between DG ECHO and DG NEAR picked up in 2018, and are progressing at different speeds with variations according to the sector.
Finding 8	Coordination between DG ECHO and the UN system has steadily improved since 2015.
Finding 9	DG ECHO's response is built around, and explicitly complementary to, the Turkish response.
Finding 10	As European funding has grown quickly and to an unprecedented level, non-European donors have reduced their own humanitarian funding to Turkey.

Overall conclusions: DG ECHO's programme in Turkey was well aligned with its programming frameworks and with the Government of Turkey's policies. Coordination with DG NEAR and with the UN has improved.

EU Added Value: did the DG ECHO programme achieve more than if EU member states had responded individually?

Finding 11 The scale and scope of DG ECHO's Facility funding provides strong EU added value, and Member States ask that EU/DG ECHO further applies its consequent leverage.

Overall conclusions: the mechanism of the Facility has allowed European Member States to undertake exceptionally large humanitarian initiatives at country-wide scale - initiatives that are best implemented when resources are combined in this way and managed as a single project.

Effectiveness: did DG ECHO achieve its strategic and sector objectives?

DG ECHO's strategic objective in Turkey was to:

- Ensure that an initial 1 million vulnerable refugees in Turkey are protected from harm, until lasting solutions are modelled and integrated into Government systems – resulting in sustainable and equitable access to services.

DG ECHO's sector objectives were:

- **Protection:** ECHO successfully identifies an initial 1 million vulnerable refugees, their specific needs and links them with the right information to regularise their status to access social services and to improve their living conditions and well-being.
- **Basic Needs:** An initial 1 million vulnerable refugees in Turkey have the means to meet their requirements for everyday living and contingencies are in place for new emergencies.
- **Health:** 710,500 vulnerable refugees in Turkey have access to adequate primary and specialised healthcare.

- **Education:** 300,000 vulnerable out-of-school refugee children in Turkey are enrolled in the formal education system and regularly attend classes.

Finding 12	The strategic objective of the Management Framework has been largely achieved, and is on track to be achieved by the end of Phase 2 of the Facility.
Finding 13	Vulnerability targeting remains difficult, due to Government of Turkey restrictions on individual or household assessment, and limitations on data sharing.
Finding 14	The risks and assumptions of the Management Framework, and of the four thematic objectives (sectors) were for the most part appropriate and remain relevant.
Finding 15	DG ECHO's largest programmes for basic needs (Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)) and for education (Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE)) provided exceptional reach and coverage to both Syrian and non-Syrian refugees, with benefits evenly distributed across the country.
Finding 16	DG ECHO's major programmes benefit women and girls more than men and boys. DG ECHO's partners were somewhat effective at addressing physical (not mental) disabilities.
Finding 17	DG ECHO's programmes are not sufficiently sensitive to the different protection risks and vulnerabilities experienced by refugees according to their demographic profile and current location.
Finding 18	The ESSN is highly effective in providing timely, safe and regular support to 1.5 million refugees nationwide, but the amount of the monthly cash payment is no longer seen as sufficient to meet the basic needs of refugees.
Finding 19	DG ECHO's programme has considerably increased access to government and non-government services for refugees who are registered and in-province. However, a significant number of refugees are either unregistered, or registered and out-of-province, and existing measures might not be sufficient to reach them.
Finding 20	DG ECHO's education interventions enhanced the well-being of school-age children, and it is likely that CCTE has improved school enrolment and retention.
Finding 21	DG ECHO has filled some key gaps in health service provision and significantly increased refugee access to Government health services in Turkey.
Finding 22	DG ECHO's contracted visibility requirements seem to be met by all partners, but awareness of the EU's role and contribution are low among refugees and the Turkish public. These visibility efforts do not appear to be influencing refugee or Turkish views of the European Union.

Overall conclusions: the strategic and sectoral objectives of DG ECHO in Turkey have been largely achieved, and are on track to be achieved by the end of Phase 2 of the Facility. These results were greatly facilitated by the substantial political and financial commitments from the Government of Turkey to welcome refugees, and to include refugees within government health and education programmes. DG ECHO has met the expectations of the Facility Steering Committee.

Efficiency: did DG ECHO obtain good value for money, was the budget appropriate, and did DG ECHO put in place a good monitoring system?

Finding 23	System-wide, the main factors of efficiency stem from the huge scale of some activities, and the fact that they capitalise on government systems. Some inefficiencies resulted from the difficulties encountered by NGOs in complying with Turkish regulatory frameworks.
Finding 24	The EU's per capita budget for Turkey is larger than its budgets for comparable Syrian refugee-hosting countries. The DG ECHO share of the overall Facility budget was determined mainly by DG ECHO's ability to scale up rapidly and by its experience with cash-based assistance.
Finding 25	Despite the limitations on data collection and surveys, DG ECHO's monitoring and reporting system supports sound management of operations, and permits mid-course corrections as new challenges and opportunities arise.

Overall conclusions: the success factors for DG ECHO's efficiency in Turkey are the economies of scale (few partners with low fixed costs and relatively large flow-through funds), and delivery through established government systems, thereby achieving exceptional national reach with relatively little administrative expenditure.

Sustainability/connectedness: how well did DG ECHO coordinate with other EU services and with the Government of Turkey to facilitate handover of programmes, and integration of assistance within Government systems?

Finding 26	For refugees who are verified and in-province, assistance in health, education and basic needs is well-integrated in Government systems. However, there are some service gaps that DG NEAR and Government are unlikely to address (especially services in all sectors for unregistered refugees, and some specialised protection needs).
Finding 27	There were some examples of the Government adapting its systems as they learned from DG ECHO projects, but for the most part DG ECHO was fitting into Government systems that were not very flexible.

Overall conclusions: coordination between DG ECHO, DG NEAR and other services has greatly improved since the Facility was created, and the relevant services are now planning and working together with a deliberate division of labour according to comparative advantages. Because of this inter-service cooperation, and the continuing support of the Government of Turkey, the prospects are good for the essential needs of refugees in Turkey to continue to be met after the end of the Facility, at which point DG ECHO is expected to play a decreased role focused upon elements of its humanitarian mandate that are unlikely to be covered by other agencies.

Recommendations² to DG ECHO Turkey

Technical conclusions	Top recommendations
Targeting strategy for future DG ECHO programming in Turkey	
DG ECHO made the correct strategic choices to target needs based on broad demographic criteria, and to deliver through Turkish social protection systems. This succeeded in bringing a very large number of refugees into the core assistance programmes very quickly. However, the use of demographic targeting criteria and government delivery systems also resulted in important coverage gaps: refugees who do not meet the demographic criteria but are nevertheless highly vulnerable, and refugees who are unregistered or registered and out-of-province.	After the second phase of the Facility, and assuming that most basic needs, education and health services are covered by universal government and development donor programmes, DG ECHO should then target interventions (mainly protection and focused basic needs support) at all vulnerable refugees who are not covered by, or who have dropped out of, the universal programmes.
Gathering and using data for planning	
DG ECHO does not have the data required for optimal planning and performance measurement. The problem of data has two origins: the first is the limitation of Turkish regulation on the collection of personal data, conduct of surveys and household visits, unless the organisation has appropriate permissions. The second problem is the regulatory framework that limits how much of the data collected by Government can be shared with outside parties.	Support partners to work with the Government of Turkey to collect new data tailored to increase understanding of the refugee population, preferably including modalities for regular comprehensive needs assessment at the municipal level together with appropriate partners and authorities.
Improving gender mainstreaming	
DG ECHO's gender policy calls on partners to conduct gender analysis, to adapt programme design and implementation according to the differential risks and opportunities facing gender groups, and to report on results with gender-differentiated data. The team found little evidence of partners conducting explicit gender analysis, but that the gender-sensitivity of programme design and implementation improved over time.	Strengthen engagement with DG ECHO's partners to improve implementation of DG ECHO's Gender Policy, in particular gender analysis by partners at the design stage, to inform action leading to better gender results.
Supporting partners to plan for after the Facility	
After the end of the Facility, there is a risk that some organisations working with refugees in Turkey will experience a sudden collapse in their humanitarian funding. To prevent such a situation, donors would need to step back in and resume their direct humanitarian funding. Also, the agencies that manage the UN system-wide strategy (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)) will need to know the funding intentions of key donors, so that they can re-prioritise and re-size the 3RP accordingly, and set humanitarian support to Turkey back on a predictable and sustainable footing at the end of the Facility.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Advocate for donor governments (Member States and others) to resume their direct contributions, so as to cover the remaining essential needs after the end of the Facility.2. Support Turkey refugee response stakeholders to anticipate a reduction in EU funding after the end of the Facility (2021).

² Initial recommendations were co-developed with DG ECHO staff in its headquarters and in the field, and these were then refined by the evaluation team, taking into account the overall evaluation analysis. They are deliberately pitched at the technical level, with the aim of informing DG ECHO and DG NEAR decisions regarding the final stages of the Facility, and planning for the post-Facility period.

Adjusting the planning and monitoring approach

DG ECHO's coordination with DG NEAR is good, in particular regarding the second phase of the Facility. However, the exit strategy from ESSN and the division of labour in protection remain to be decided. The Management Framework for the humanitarian leg of the Facility was a strong planning tool, but explicit measures to mitigate high risks were missing.

Strengthen the strategic planning for the second phase of the Facility, including greater harmonisation of DG ECHO and DG NEAR planning and reporting, and more robust processes of risk management including risk mitigation measures.

Filling gaps in education

The CCTE project has exceeded its participation targets and is likely to achieve its expected results, although more research is needed to confirm the causal relationship between CCTE and increased school attendance. Turkish authorities understand the importance of education, and there is scope to further encourage schools to admit refugee children even if they are not registered or in-province.

Continue in the short term with CCTE and outreach work related to school attendance, including initiatives to bring unregistered and out-of-province children into the formal education system, and advocate for refugees to be integrated fully into government systems in the medium-long term.

Filling gaps in health

The vast majority of refugees in Turkey can access primary health care. However there is concern about the provision of some specialised refugee health services that stakeholders felt were likely to become less available after transfer to Turkish health institutions, and about the limited services available to unregistered refugees.

Advocate for Government institutions to provide a wider range of health services to unregistered and out-of-province refugees, possibly by supporting the implementation of technical changes to health regulations.

Filling gaps in basic needs

ESSN monitoring results show that, in a range of areas, including indebtedness, quality of accommodation, food consumption, and recourse to negative coping strategies, ESSN beneficiaries are better off than non-beneficiaries, although there has been a little backsliding on some indicators (increased indebtedness and reduced spending on health) since the Turkish economic crisis started in 2018. Anticipating the end of the Facility and of ESSN, plans have been developed to transition its beneficiaries to different programmes tailored to the level of beneficiary dependency.

As proposed to the Facility Steering Committee, prepare for the transition to a new approach to basic needs by 2021, wherein beneficiaries with no capacity to work would be supported by Government welfare programmes, while beneficiaries with capacity to work would be supported in different ways to enter the labour market.

Filling gaps in protection

Progress with registration and verification has been rapid, as the Directorate General of Migration Management has continued to strengthen its capacities. However, there are a number of refugee sub-groups who are unregistered or, even if they are registered, fall through the net of available government services either because they are living out of province, or because their protection need is not addressed by existing programmes.

Advocate for expedited registration of refugees in registration backlogs or in provinces where registration has been temporarily suspended, and for the regularisation of inter-provincial residency transfers.

Strengthening communications

There is a communications deficit, a gap between what the EU has achieved with its unprecedented humanitarian programmes, and the low levels of Turkish and refugee understanding of what the EU has provided and achieved.

Work with DG NEAR and the EU Delegation in Turkey in order to help them improve refugee and Turkish public understanding of the nature of the EU's investments in Turkey, and of the results they have achieved.

