

TURKEY 2020 Operational Highlights



- Turkey is home to the world's largest refugee population, 3.6 million of whom are Syrian under temporary protection and close to 330,000 are refugees and asylum-seekers of other nationalities.
- Over 98 per cent of refugees in Turkey live among the host community, and less than 2% in Temporary Accommodation Centres.
- Turkey's refugee response is based on a comprehensive legal framework, in particular the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (2013) and the Temporary Protection Regulation (2014).
- Building on the comprehensive legal framework in place in Turkey, in line with the Refugee and Resilience Response Plan (3RP) strategic directions and in the spirit of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), UNHCR supports the inclusion of persons under temporary and international protection into national systems and, as part of the multi-stakeholder approach, has been prioritizing the provision of assistance and service delivery through national and local institutions.
- In 2020, UNHCR adapted its programming to stay and deliver during the COVID-19 pandemic providing direct assistance to vulnerable refugee and host community populations while maintaining its support to public institutions through the provision of human resources and material and technical support. UNHCR also worked closely with municipalities and local authorities to strengthen community mobilisation and promote social cohesion.

UNHCR Turkey COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges to an already complex operation in Turkey. Additional needs and priorities emerged and operating modalities were adapted to the constantly evolving situation. In close cooperation with measures adopted by the Government of Turkey to respond to the pandemic, UNHCR Turkey focused on one-off COVID-19 emergency cash assistance, the provision and distribution of hygiene materials, on communicating with communities and supporting local small-scale community-based initiatives.

COVID-19 Emergency Cash Assistance

In close coordination with the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), UNHCR Turkey initiated an emergency cash assistance programme targeting the most vulnerable refugees that were adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The one-off cash-assistance of TRY 1,000 per household, an amount which corresponds to the one-off assistance scheme by Turkey for vulnerable citizens, was transferred through the Turkish Postal Service (PTT). Potential beneficiaries were identified across Turkey, with measures taken to avoid duplication with other assistance schemes and specific vulnerability criteria were applied in cooperation with DGMM. By the end of 2020, around **79,400 households** had received the cash payments. UNHCR is expected to complete the target of 85,000 households by March 2021.

 **79,400**
households reached **372,650**
individuals reached

Distribution of Materials

UNHCR provided hygiene kits and other in-kind assistance to local authorities and partners who distributed them to the population in need. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was also provided to authorities across the country to contribute to their protection while carrying out their duties. In 2020, UNHCR provided:



Over **159,000 refugee and host community households** received **hygiene kits** in **42 provinces** through **61 partners** including local authorities, municipalities and NGOs.



Around **14,000 PPE**, **80,500 latex gloves** and **20,600 masks** as well as goggles, thermometers and hand sanitizers to support officials at the provincial directorates and borders to carry out their duties and respond to basic needs of persons in a safe manner.



Over **250,000 core relief items** and PPEs to **six temporary accommodation centres** in South East Turkey.

Community Initiatives

UNHCR directly supported **12 community initiatives** to produce soap bars and masks as well as protective shields for their communities. The initiatives brought together persons under temporary or international protection and Turkish citizens in nine provinces in Central Anatolia to produce items ranging from masks to bars of soap, which were then distributed to refugees and host communities through 12 partners. Around **25,000 bars of soap**, **2,200 face shields** and **127,000 masks** were produced and distributed to local and refugee communities as well as to local state institutions and healthcare workers. In Şanlıurfa, **350,000 masks** were produced by Turkish and refugee women through a project undertaken with the Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality. In Hatay, sewing machines procured by UNHCR for a community support initiative were used to produce over **35,000 masks** and **2,000 pieces of children's clothes**. In Istanbul, **45,000 reusable face masks** were manufactured through a textile workshop refurbished by UNHCR. Masks were distributed to vulnerable households.

Protection

In 2020, UNHCR continued to **promote access to and the provision of protection**, advocating for the admission of persons in need of international protection, their access to fair and efficient national protection procedures and promoting procedural standards and safeguards by working in close partnership with DGMM, the Turkish Coast Guard and Land Forces, the Gendarmerie General Command (GGC), the Ministry of Justice and the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA). Cooperation with DGMM to support national registration and international protection procedures remained a priority.

UNHCR delivered over **100,000 humanitarian relief items** such as thermal clothing, hygiene kits, food and water to support the Turkish authorities in **responding to immediate humanitarian needs of persons rescued, intercepted and apprehended at border areas**. Reception conditions were also improved at the western border areas of Turkey by providing accommodation spaces, containers and water and sanitation facilities.

UNHCR supports **registration of persons in need of international protection** by working with DGMM and Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMMs) with a surge capacity of bilingual support staff and ongoing technical assistance. In 2020, UNHCR also conducted **registration missions** in 16 provinces to observe registration practices and to provide feedback and recommendations for improvement. The missions allowed DGMM and UNHCR to observe the needs and challenges on the ground, while also strengthening the relationship between the two entities leading to a stronger rapport and higher level of trust.

In June, DGMM and UNHCR launched an **online appointment system** for persons under temporary protection and international protection applicants and status-holders to enable online booking for various procedures at PDMMs such as updating personal data, renewal of ID cards or requesting travel permits, in order to facilitate smooth processing and to increase compliance with COVID measures at PDMMs. Information on the online system was made available through UNHCR communication channels and DGMM's website in multiple languages.

DGMM and UNHCR conducted various **training sessions** for staff and officials. These included induction trainings for 85 newly recruited staff at PDMMs and DGMM, for 53 psychosocial support personnel at removal centres, for staff of International Protection Bureaux (Decision Centres in Ankara and Istanbul), country of origin information (COI) training on major risk profiles of specific countries for 47 personnel from DGMM and PDMMs as well as trainings for 12 newly recruited interpreters. The trainings helped to increase the technical expertise of officials and to strive towards greater compliance with international principles and the national legal framework

Virtual **workshops** were also held in support of the **national asylum system**. These included a workshop on voluntary repatriation procedures and challenges with participants from DGMM and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC); a meeting with asylum experts from Switzerland, Sweden and the Netherlands to discuss registration procedures, reception conditions, refugee status determination procedures, quality assurance and integration policies; and lastly, a workshop on statelessness determination procedures with UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe and staff from DGMM. Two **study visits** were also undertaken: one to Ireland on judicial systems related to asylum in March and a virtual exchange on COI fact finding with the Swedish Migration Agency in November.

Access to Legal Protection, Information and Legal Assistance



3,800

Refugees and asylum-seekers received legal assistance through legal clinics

In cooperation with the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA), the legal clinics in Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Hatay and Kilis provided **legal assistance** to more than **3,800 refugees and asylum-seekers** and information on national procedures, rights and

obligations, appeal mechanisms, matters of civil law, and the protection of women and children. In cooperation with UTBA, UNHCR supported more than **2,000 legal aid** applications through bar associations in 18 provinces by covering attorney fees, notary expenses, and translation and transportation costs.

In cooperation with DGMM, UNHCR drafted **legal and guidance documents** for persons under temporary or international protection and for staff working at PDMMs at border areas and removal centres. Topics covered the national legal framework on gender-based violence, access to legal aid and legal assistance, and rights and obligations. The documents allow for a stronger understanding of and adoption of the legal framework as well as information sharing on the rights and obligations of persons intercepted and rescued at border areas.

Documents, reports and papers were also prepared in close collaboration with DGMM such as an evaluation of findings of **39 on-the-job visits** to PDMMs; a comparative overview of voluntary repatriation practices; a country of origin information (COI) method guide, and standard operating procedures on statelessness determination procedures, asylum procedures at border crossings, and on a humanitarian residence comparative review.

Joint DGMM-UNHCR Harmonization Initiative in 2020

In 2020, DGMM and UNHCR conducted **22 events**, virtually and in person, reaching **441 international students**, **802 refugees** and **2,775 host community members and service providers**. These included:

Engaged Conversations through 12 focus-group discussions on social cohesion and intercultural dialogue in three provinces with accompanying social events reaching 802 refugees and 251 host community members.

Six Regional NGO Meetings with 184 NGOs and representatives of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the Ministry of Interior, the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) and the Turkish Red Crescent to encourage the cooperation between the public sector and civil society and promote the engagement of civil society in social cohesion.

Joint reporting on the DGMM-UNHCR Harmonization Initiative to inform relevant institutions and line ministries.

One Migration, Security and Social Cohesion Regional High-Level Workshop covering the Marmara Region to sensitize 350 senior officials on national policies and practices and encourage local policies on social cohesion.

Three Social Cohesion Workshops in Istanbul and Bursa with the Presidency of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of National Education reaching 1,127 religious officials, teachers and school administrators as interlocutors between refugee and host communities.

Six regional social cohesion workshops for 341 academics and 441 international students from 99 universities to promote academic exchange on social cohesion.

Cooperation with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services

UNHCR continued to collaborate closely with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS) in Turkey for the implementation of the national policy of inclusion of refugees in social protection mechanisms. UNHCR's cooperation with and support to the ministry is a critical aspect of its protection strategy. In 2020, UNHCR focused on strengthening the capacity of social service centres (SSCs), child institutions and violence prevention and monitoring centres to provide protective, preventive and supportive services, as well as counselling and rehabilitation.

Around **180 MoFLSS staff members** were trained on international protection, specifically, the protection of women and children, the legal framework and interviewing techniques. In 23 provinces, 74 SSCs, three provincial directorates of MoFLSS, four child support centres and one child home complex were supported with staff, vehicles and materials, comprising **200 social workers, interpreters, specialists, security staff and 92 vehicles**.

Because of rising needs during the pandemic, **56,000 hygiene materials (including surgical masks, latex gloves and bars of soap)** were provided to SSCs in all provinces and close to **63,700 bedsheets** were distributed to the 258 child protection institutions in 79 provinces. Additionally, 27 child support centres in Ankara and Istanbul, the ministry was supported with computers, and online meeting and cloud collaboration platforms.

Child protection, prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV), and identification of and support to refugees with specific needs

Together with its partners, UNHCR identified and assessed over **9,300 individuals with specific needs**. They were counselled and referred to partners and service providers for further interventions. Some **10,400 individuals from 4,320 households** were assisted with multi-purpose cash for protection concerns including psychological, medical, transportation and accommodation assistance for refugees with specific needs, including GBV survivors. An additional **90 individuals from 25 households** were supported with relocation grants.

UNHCR launched a **GBV awareness-raising and mass information campaign** as an inter-agency effort focused on development of context-specific key GBV and the mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) messages targeting refugee committees, a process which involved community engagement and feedback. The campaign helped to provide guidance in support of MHPSS needs and well-being of the refugee communities in Turkey, together with a corresponding need to raise awareness and knowledge on GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response mechanisms for the refugee communities in Turkey.

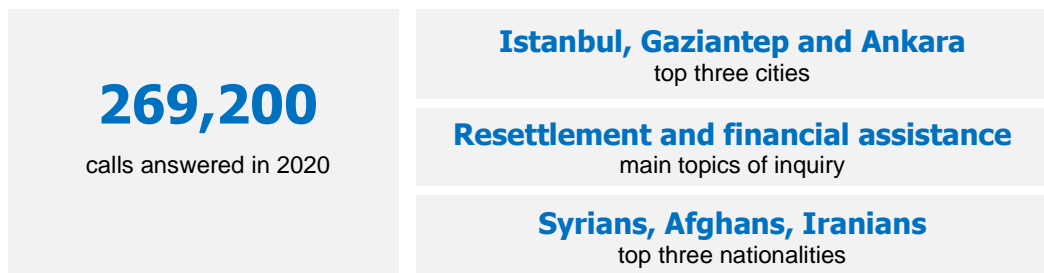
To identify protection responses and solutions for children at risk, **best interest procedures** were undertaken for **604 children**. UNHCR and partner NGO's conducted best interest assessments for 493 children. A UNHCR-led inter-agency best interest determination panel comprising of representatives from UN and NGOs convened monthly leading to 111 best interest determinations.

Communication with Communities

Communicating with communities was vital in reaching refugees and asylum-seekers with the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. UNHCR's communication platforms became a critical means of conveying information about COVID-19 as well as precautionary measures, available services, government announcements and advisories, and how to reach out for help. Information was shared in Arabic, Farsi, English and Turkish.

UNHCR Counselling Line

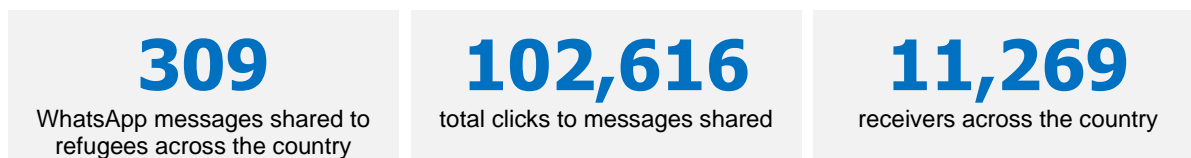
The UNHCR counselling line operated uninterrupted with its 34 operators which increased to 42 operators in June. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, financial assistance-related inquires increased from a pre-COVID average of eight per cent of total inquiries to 25 per cent. In September, UNHCR implemented a specific **gender-based violence (GBV) line** for individuals at risk of, or survivors of, GBV, providing both a recorded message on reporting and supporting mechanisms and available support channels and services as well as GBV counselling through specialised operators. Between September and December, close to 4,000 calls were received and counselling was provided through the GBV counselling line.



UNHCR regularly published up-to-date information posts in Arabic, Farsi, Turkish and English, on the **UNHCR Turkey Information Board** on Facebook using posters, announcements, videos and Q&As. The Facebook information page reached approximately 79,500 new likes and 83,300 new followers in 2020. Some 330,000 COVID-19 related materials, produced by the Turkish Ministry of Health were printed and distributed to UNHCR field offices, partners, PDMM and the Ministry of Health premises across the country. UNHCR also supported DGMM with printed materials and videos in multiple languages on COVID-19 mitigation measures.

The **WhatsApp communication tree**, set up in March, facilitated rapid information-sharing between UNHCR and refugees. UNHCR Turkey also reached refugees through a **bulk SMS initiatives** and in total, 252,250 SMS were successfully sent in three months regarding various topics including an HES code video which was produced in Arabic and Farsi to assist refugee communities to access public institutions and services, as well as information about the Help webpage or dispelling of rumours and misinformation.

Through the **WhatsApp communication tree** in 2020, from March onwards:



Help Website

Help provides refugees with information from registration and documentation to education and livelihoods, in Arabic, Farsi, English and Turkish. Since its launch in August 2017 until the end of 2020, the Help website received approximately 1,050,660 unique visitors, of which **435,500 were in 2020** alone.

Services Advisor

Services Advisor is an inter-agency tool, operated by UNHCR, for persons under temporary or international protection in Turkey to search for service providers in their area. Partners updated their services in 2020 to reflect changing working modalities due to COVID-19. New services to alleviate the impact of the pandemic on refugees were also added, including awareness-raising, counselling, psychosocial support and referrals. In 2020, Services Advisor was visited by over **64,150 users**.

Durable Solutions

Access to Higher Education


814

Youth receive full university scholarships


3,600

Students under international protection receive cash to contribute to tuition fees

UNHCR continued to work closely with the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) to provide university scholarships for refugee students as well as institutional capacity support. For the academic year 2020-2021, UNHCR contributed to the tertiary education of **744 students under temporary protection and 70 students of other nationalities** through higher education scholarship programmes in coordination with YTB. UNHCR also supported **475 university students** through semester cash grants to support students who cannot benefit from the fee waiver that exists for Syrian nationals. Meanwhile, UNHCR continued to advocate for

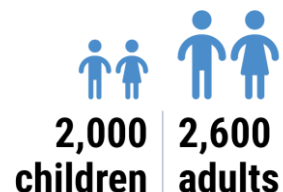
the waiver of higher education fees for international protection students.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of the **27 higher education advisors**, who usually assist scholarship students with academic advice, was adapted to provide targeted support and monitoring through phone and social media platforms to help students with challenges in online learning. UNHCR developed a new support toolkit to guide and structure advisors' activities and to refer students to assistance outside of academic support.

Turkish Language courses

Some **2,000 refugee children** taking Turkish language courses transitioned to online learning. Following the suspension of all classroom learning by the Ministry of National Education, the provincial directorates of MoFLSS put in place measures for free and accessible remote online learning. These measures included internet quotas, individual or smaller-group sessions with children who need additional tutoring, and pre-recorded training videos which children could access through WhatsApp groups.

With UNHCR's support, more than **2,600 adults** were able to attend basic Turkish language courses in eight public education centres (PECs) in four provinces. UNHCR supported the PECs to increase access to language and skills training for youth and adult Syrians under temporary protection; as well as the Education Informatics Network (known as the EBA Support Centres) and Youth Centres with computers and furniture.



attend Turkish language courses in Public Education Centres

Self-Reliance and Livelihoods

UNHCR works with its partners and with the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR), the Vocational Qualifications Authority, and the Directorate General for International Labour Force (DGoILF) of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services to support refugees and to contribute to their socio-economic inclusion in Turkey. As in most countries, many lost their livelihoods because of the pandemic. UNHCR also collaborated with cooperatives and the private sector to support and facilitate refugees' employment.

UNHCR supported İŞKUR in 2020 through training and capacity development of staff and interpreters who provided counselling on access to jobs and registration to the İŞKUR database reaching over **16,000 individuals**. Interpreters facilitated over **3,600 referrals** to İŞKUR on-the-job training programmes funded by the World Bank. UNHCR also supported İŞKUR with the development of a job-matching software system to strengthen public employment services and trained 90 İŞKUR staff to work on and manage the system.

The World Bank, DGoILF and UNHCR launched a labour market impact assessment to measure changes and trends in the Turkish labour market after the inclusion of the Syrian workforce. The assessment, which is still ongoing, will contribute to the policy-making of MoFLSS and other government counterparts in order to increase formal job opportunities for Syrians and Turkish citizens.



42,500
 individuals registered as
 job seekers in İŞKUR database
 received job counselling services

1,980
 individuals supported with
 access to employment
 by UNHCR

2,343
 persons received direct
 counselling on access to
 labour market and
 entrepreneurship

In collaboration with the Ministry of National Education, UNHCR also supports PECs to increase the access of refugees to vocational training. In 2020, eight PECs in Ankara, Bursa, Kayseri and Konya received equipment and technical vocational training. Vocational training on cooking apprenticeship, service and hospitality, computer-based technologies, dry cleaning and textiles reached **268 beneficiaries**. Courses are ongoing.

UNHCR also launched an initiative to support social entrepreneurship activities and **cooperatives** to promote their productivity and sustainability. In July, a virtual meeting on 'Cooperatives as an Alternative Modality for Refugee Livelihoods in the Context of COVID-19' was organized. Over 110 participants from public institutions, municipalities, the World Bank, UN and civil society partners participated in raising awareness of the legal framework for cooperatives, sharing experiences and good practices and discussing ways of support.



6,815
 Work permits facilitated by UNHCR



1,941
 beneficiaries reached through
 skills-development programmes



1,302
 individuals benefitted from
 entrepreneurship support in
 11 cities across Turkey

Refugee entrepreneurship and social cohesion

Through its partners, UNHCR provides financial and administrative support to persons under temporary and international protection to obtain work permits and set up businesses. In 2020, entrepreneurship programmes were conducted online to give over **1,300 refugees** the knowledge and necessary tools to start, develop and/or register their businesses. The programme included legal procedures, establishing businesses, obtaining a business license, access to finance, cash and in-kind grants, with support provided for business start-ups.

In partnership with the Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce, UNHCR conducted **entrepreneurship trainings** and three awareness-raising sessions to over **700 participants** covering e-marketing training, online fashion design and designing business projects targeting Syrian entrepreneurs and Syrian small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The focus was to increase efficiency, productivity, and self-reliance while contributing to social cohesion.

UNHCR implemented **vocational, language, entrepreneurship and skills-building training** programmes through its partners reaching over **3,240 refugees** in 2020.

Resettlement and complementary pathways

Resettlement remained an important durable solution for some of the refugees with the most acute vulnerabilities and protection risks. The COVID-19 situation significantly affected the processing for resettlement; however **remote interviewing measures** were set in place in five locations across Turkey, in cooperation with DGMM, allowing interviews, which were suspended from March to June to gradually resume. The pandemic also affected resettlement departures because of the global pause of international flights between March and September.

6,097
 Refugees
 submitted

15
 Resettlement
 countries

23%
 Other
 Nationalities

4,048
 Refugees
 departed

77%
 Syrians

Monitoring the voluntary nature of spontaneous returns



16,805
 Voluntary return interviews
 observed by UNHCR in 2020

compared to previous years. The total number of interviews observed by UNHCR since 2016 is 101,530 individuals. UNHCR coordinated with PDMMs maintaining a constant presence in the southeast region where

In 2020, UNHCR observed the voluntary return interviews of 16,805 individuals (close to 12,000 families) in 17 provinces across Turkey, including South East Turkey, Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara. As a result of the pandemic and related travel restrictions, a reduction in returns was recorded in 2020

more than 90 per cent of the total UNHCR-monitored interviews were undertaken, helping Syrian refugees' access to accurate information and confirming the voluntary nature of their intended return. Missions to border areas continued during the pandemic as soon as the situation permitted and returns resumed.

The majority of returnees with whom UNHCR spoke in 2020 intended to return to Idlib, Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa. More than half indicated as reasons for return to reunite with family members, followed by the need to care for dependent family members.

Inter-agency coordination

The **Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) 2020-21 Turkey Country Chapter**, co-led by UNDP and UNHCR, was launched on 21 February amounting to USD 1.17 billion. The 3RP remained the principal strategy, coordination and fundraising platform for international support to Turkey's refugee response and demonstrated its importance in adapting rapidly to the added burdens caused by COVID-19 on refugees living in Turkey. UNHCR continued to lead the Protection and Basic Needs sectors of the 3RP, and worked with other sectors to adapt services and programmes in response to the pandemic, resulting in an updated, **consolidated appeal** of USD 1.3 billion launched in June, including USD 163 million to address the immediate impacts of COVID-19. UNHCR also led the development and introduction of an inter-agency protection needs assessment in June and repeated in September, providing a valuable snap shot of the protection impacts of COVID-19 which helped steer the inter-agency response and, given its success, will be repeated on a quarterly basis in 2021.



In preparation for the **Brussels IV Conference**, the UN and EU co-facilitated virtual consultation meetings with over 60 participants from civil society on a number of cross-cutting themes, such as 'durable solutions' and 'impacts of COVID-19', to reflect the views and share recommendations from civil society working in Turkey.

The **3RP High-level Stakeholders Roundtable** concluding the process for the 3RP 2021-2022 planning took place on 30 November with the participation of close to 100 government officials, representatives of donor countries, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions and civil society. Strategic directions and priorities of the upcoming 3RP were presented and the plan was endorsed.

Good Practices Portal

To follow from the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees, and ahead of the Brussels IV Conference on the Future of Syria and the Region in June, UNHCR launched a **data portal of good practices** on the refugee response by government institutions, local authorities, national and international organizations. A number of good practices on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on refugees were also added to the portal.



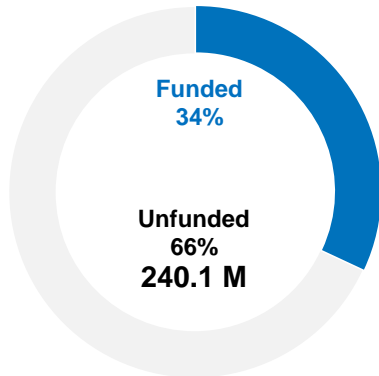
2021 Outlook

UNHCR will continue to work closely with the Turkish authorities and public institutions in support of an inclusive approach in the implementation of the national legal framework, in particular in key areas of registration and asylum procedures, access to legal aid, services to persons with specific needs, and enabling refugees' economic opportunities and their contributions to the host community. UNHCR remains equally committed to working with the authorities on social cohesion and harmonization mechanisms and will continue to align with the objectives and guiding principles of the 3RP and other national and development frameworks, in support of a whole of society approach. Most significantly, UNHCR will keep working with its partners and in coordination with local institutions to address the needs of persons under temporary and international protection and assist communities in light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

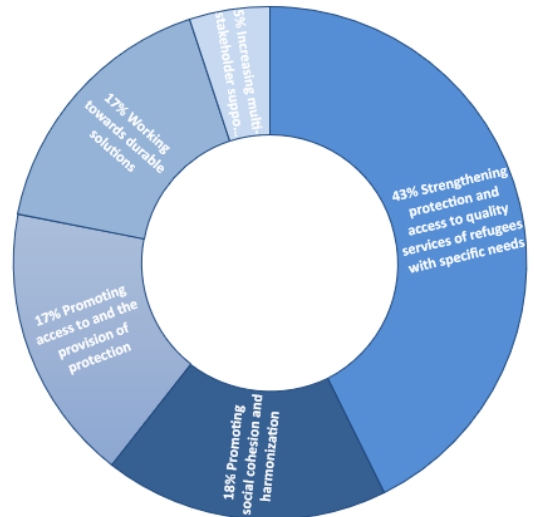
UNHCR Funding:

USD 124.7 million

Funding received for UNHCR operations in Turkey, out of USD 364.8 million requested in 2020



UNHCR Turkey budget per strategic priorities



- 17% Promoting access to and the provision of protection
- 43% Strengthening protection and access to quality services of refugees with specific needs
- 18% Promoting social cohesion and harmonization
- 17% Working towards durable solutions
- 5% Increasing multi-stakeholder support to the refugee response

UNHCR thanks donors for their support to UNHCR Turkey in 2020

USA | European Union | Germany | Japan | France | Republic of Korea | Norway | Unilever (UK) | Switzerland | CERF | Slovenia | United Kingdom | Denmark | Canada | Sweden | Finland | Spain | Ireland | Private donors

CONTACTS

Amira Abd El-Khalek, Reporting Officer, Turkey, abdelkha@unhcr.org, Tel: +90 312 409 7420

LINKS

UNHCR Turkey website | Regional Portal - Syria Regional Refugee Response | Regional Portal - Mediterranean | Facebook | Twitter | Services Advisor | UNHCR Help | UNHCR Turkey Information Board | Good Practices Portal