



# The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)

## Helping Refugees in Turkey

### What is the ESSN?

ESSN is a multi-purpose cash transfer scheme providing monthly assistance through debit cards to over one and a half million of the most vulnerable refugees in Turkey.

Those receiving assistance decide for themselves how to cover essential needs like rent, bills, food, and medicine.

The ESSN is the largest humanitarian aid programme ever funded by the European Union. Currently worth one billion euros, it is funded under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

### What are the objectives?

- help vulnerable refugees to meet their basic needs;
- Reduce or stabilize families' use of coping strategies such as sending children to work instead of school;
- reduce or stabilize household debt and help families regain financial control and independence;
- enhance national crisis response capacities.

### Who receives assistance?

Registered families living in Turkey under international protection or temporary protection can apply to the ESSN.

ESSN selects those most in need, such as large families, the elderly, single females, single-headed households, and people living with disabilities.

Those employed with a valid work permit or who own registered assets in Turkey are not eligible to receive assistance.

### What has been achieved so far?

Since the announcement of the ESSN in September 2016, the programme has successfully scaled up nationwide and features:

- Assistance to over 1.64 million people by June 2019, following an initial pilot in October 2016 and nationwide roll-out in November 2016.
- Periodic top-ups introduced in August 2017 to support smaller families who do not benefit from economies of scale.
- Monthly top-ups introduced in August 2018 to support people living with severe disability who need a caretaker.
- Premium accountability to affected populations: 10.4 million information SMSs sent; 1.3 million query / complaint calls answered by the TRC/Kizilay call centre, 79,300 [Facebook](#) followers.
- Synergies with UNICEF's Conditional Cash Transfers for Education (CCTE) programme.
- Coordination with other refugee assistance programmes in various sectors (basic needs, protection, livelihoods etc.)

WFP regularly measures ESSN beneficiary outcomes and uses its findings to inform programme design:

- Until mid-2018 monitoring analysis demonstrated impressive improvement in outcomes among assisted people. However, 2019 data show a deterioration in all indicators measured, likely due to persistent high inflation and no corresponding increase in the transfer value. Yet, ESSN beneficiaries show better results than refugees who do not benefit from the programme, indicating that the cash assistance may be preventing a situation which would otherwise be much worse. Concerned that the current transfer value is not sufficient to meet the needs of assisted people, WFP is using these findings to advocate for suitable solutions.

## How does it work?

Each eligible family receives a card like this. The card can be used at ATMs or to pay in shops. Every month, it is topped up with 120 Turkish Liras for each member of the family. Families also receive periodic “top-ups”. Refugees with severe disability receive an additional monthly top-up payment of 600 Turkish Liras.



## What other support is there?

The Government of Turkey has welcomed more refugees than any other country, providing them with services such as healthcare and education.

The Government's response is supported by the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, which includes WFP's food assistance to families living in camps, UNICEF's conditional cash transfers for education (CCTE) using the ESSN card, language or vocational trainings, and more. The plan coordinates the response to maximise assistance to those in need.

## Why multi-purpose cash?

Cash empowers people to manage their families' priorities and needs with a degree of choice and independence. Up to 82 percent of assisted women take part in most decisions relating to the use of assistance.

Turkey's markets function well, so multi-purpose cash allows recipients to make the most of the little money they have. This form of assistance is cost efficient: at least 87.5 percent of all ESSN funding ends up in the hands of those in need. Cash also supports the local economies where it is spent.

## Who does what?

In an unprecedented approach, WFP and the Turkish Red Crescent (Kizilay) implement the ESSN from shared Joint Management Cell (JMC) premises in Ankara.

WFP provides oversight and technical support and plays a key role in coordinating Basic Needs assistance with other responders in Turkey.

Kizilay manages the delivery of the programme nationwide, working with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS) and its welfare centres, which process applications for the ESSN.

The Ministry of Interior's Directorates General for Migration Management (DGMM) and Population and Citizenship Affairs (DGPC) are responsible for ID issuance and address registration respectively; both are ESSN prerequisites.

ECHO, the EU agency funding the ESSN, and the MoFLSS co-chair the ESSN Governing Board, providing strategic direction for the ESSN programme.

## What comes next?

ESSN embodies Grand Bargain commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit, including increased cash assistance and support for national responders. It established a sustainable and nationally-integrated system to support refugees over the long term. Lessons learned from the unique approach and scale of ESSN will help design assistance elsewhere in future.

ECHO, WFP, Kizilay and the Government of Turkey are working together to design the evolution of the ESSN. To inform this, WFP completed a profiling exercise exploring the potential capacity of ESSN beneficiaries to engage in the labour market. In partnership with local authorities, the civil society and UN agencies, WFP has started mapping livelihood programmes available to refugees, that is programmes that can help them become self-reliant. In addition, WFP itself is developing self-reliance programmes.

## In Turkey, cash assistance reaches non-Syrian refugees too

Ahlen, from Iraq, is a 38-year-old widow and the sole care provider for five children. She went through a perilous journey from Tal Afar to Sinjar in Iraq and then on to Manbij and Aleppo in Syria before crossing into Turkey. Ahlen and her children started receiving ESSN cash in 2018. This assistance is just enough to help the family over the line each month. However, Ahlen said, "I am still able to buy the children a small gift on their birthdays or for festivals, which makes all of us happier. Even being able to buy a school bag is a good feeling," says Ahlen.



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