

**PROGRAM TURKEY**

**THE EU FACILITY FOR REFUGEES IN TURKEY  
PREVAILING MISPERCEPTION  
VS. ACTUAL STATE OF PLAY**

**BY**

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**OBSERVATOIRE DE LA TURQUIE ET DE SON ENVIRONNEMENT GÉOPOLITIQUE**



**T**he EU-Turkey refugee agreement, also known as the “EU-Turkey deal,” was highlighted in the news in late August 2017 when European Commissioner for Budget, Günther Oettinger, stated that EU countries must pay more money from their national member state budgets to meet their obligations under the EU-Turkey deal.<sup>1</sup> Since its creation, many aspects of the EU-Turkey deal have provoked significant controversy in public opinion: the 1 for 1 Syrian refugee swap, the slow pace of relocation and resettlement of refugees, potential legal ramifications of the deal, etc. But one component of the deal in particular, the fund known as the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (herein referred to as the “Facility”), has generated heated criticism largely due to a prevailing misperception over how Facility funding is allocated.

A mistaken perception present in EU public opinion is that this Facility will eventually transfer a total of 6 billion euros of EU money directly to the Turkish government in exchange for Turkey continuing to support and manage Syrian refugees in its territory and to block them from illegally entering the EU. This point of view has fueled impressions in EU public opinion that the government of Turkey is being too demanding and is cynically taking advantage of the Syrian refugee crisis to extort money from the EU. Such misperceptions have contributed to souring public opinion in certain segments of the EU against Turkey at a time when there is a pressing need for the EU and Turkey to work more cooperatively to find durable solutions to the Syrian refugee crisis. Future cooperation is endangered by negative public opinion, which risks exacerbating the existing crisis.

Given that the initial period of the Facility is set to conclude at the end of 2017, and a new period of funding is conditionally set to be established for 2018, now is a propitious time to take a moment to examine the Facility. This article delves deeper into one specific aspect of the EU-Turkey deal – how the Facility is structured and how its funding has been disbursed to date. In the following text, a brief overview of the framework of the Facility is provided. This is followed by an explanation of the origins of the EU general public’s misperceptions about Facility funding. Subsequently, this article briefly parses the Facility to examine how funding has actually been disbursed to date.

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<sup>1</sup> Kroet, Cynthia. “Günther Oettinger: Countries must spend more on EU-Turkey refugee deal.” Politico Online, Published 25 August 2017. (Accessed 07 September 2017). Url: <http://www.politico.eu/article/gunther-oettinger-countries-must-spend-more-on-eu-turkey-refugee-deal/>

## WHAT IS THE EU FACILITY FOR REFUGEES IN TURKEY?

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At the time of the Facility's creation, Turkey was hosting over 2.2 million Syrian refugees and had already spent more than 8 billion USD on humanitarian aid for this population.<sup>2</sup> Concurrently, European countries faced massive pressure from large influxes of refugees illegally crossing from Turkey into the EU. In an effort to diminish illegal migration to Europe, the EU convened with the government of Turkey to create the EU-Turkey deal. The Facility, a fund that was created to provide both humanitarian and non-humanitarian financial aid for Syrian refugees residing in Turkey, was established as an integral component of this deal.

The initial period of the Facility, in operation between 2016-2017, is comprised of a total fund of 3 billion euros. 2 billion of this is financed by national contributions from individual EU member state budgets and the remaining 1 billion is financed via the EU budget.<sup>3</sup> Following its initial period, the Facility could potentially be prolonged into a second period in 2018, wherein an additional 3-billion-euro fund would be set up. Extension of the Facility into 2018 is dependent on the establishment of an agreement between the EU and the government of Turkey.

Facility funding is managed by a steering committee that meets periodically to decide how to distribute funds. Funds are dispensed on a "project" basis. All manner of organizations – inter-governmental (IGO)s, non-governmental (NGO)s, and governmental – actively compete to propose projects to the steering committee. In order for Facility funding to be physically disbursed, it must go through the following process: commitment/decision (where projects are committed/decided), contracting (where specific projects are contracted to organizations) and disbursement (where funding is sent to organizations which have contracted for projects).

While the 3 billion euros must be contracted within the 2 year period of the 2016-2017 Facility – meaning that contracts for projects must be signed and funds earmarked within this timeframe – the actual collection and disbursement of funds extends over a longer period of time. EU member states have until 2019 to complete their full contributions into the Facility. As for

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<sup>2</sup> Meeting of heads of state or government with Turkey – Turkey-EU statement, 29/11/2015. European Council Press Release. Published 29 November 2015. (Accessed 07 September 2017). Url: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/29-eu-turkey-meeting-statement/>

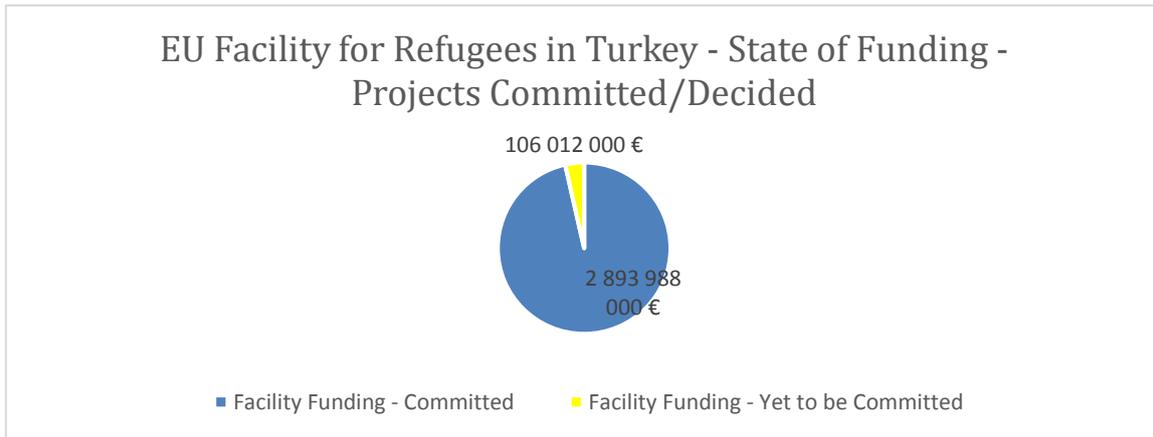
As of the date of publication of this article, the total number of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey is over 3.1 million. Source: UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal. Url: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>

<sup>3</sup> Refugee facility for Turkey: Member states agree on details of financing. European Council Press Release. Published 03 February 2016. (Accessed 07 September 2017). Url: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/02/03-refugee-facility-for-turkey/>

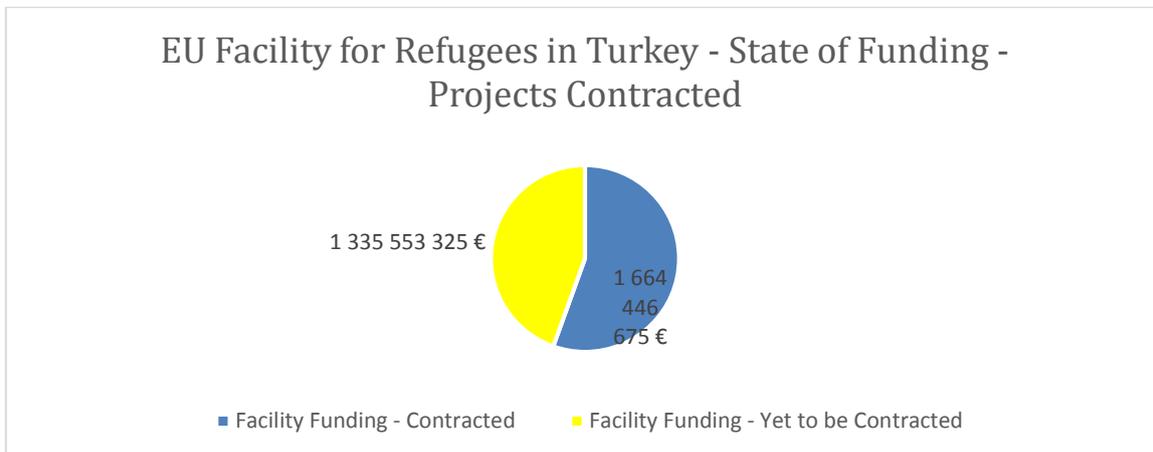
disbursement of the funds, certain longer-term contracted projects (for example infrastructure works) may not be fully paid for until 2021.<sup>4</sup>

According to the latest published data from the European Commission (6 September 2017), the “state of play” of the initial period of Facility funding is the following<sup>5</sup>:

**Figure 1:**



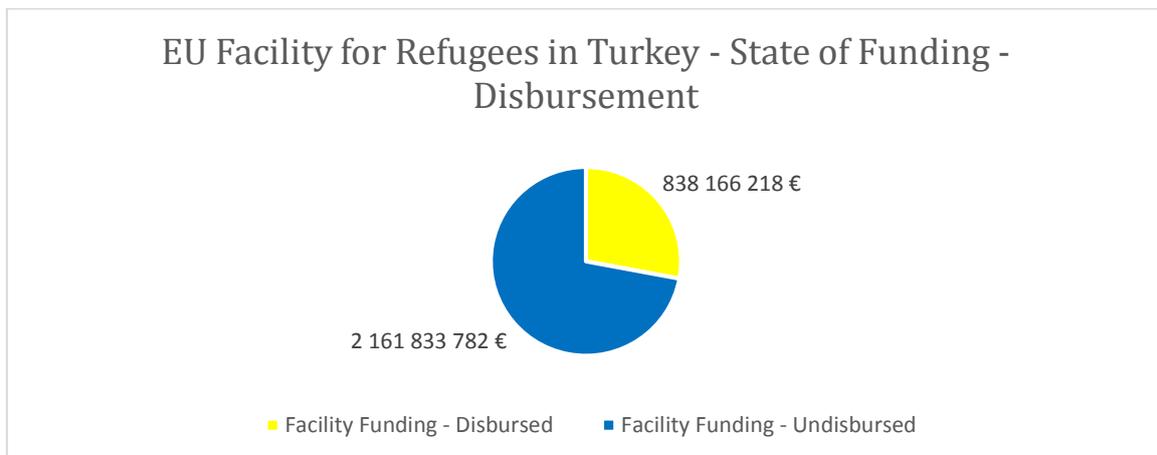
**Figure 2:**



<sup>4</sup> First Annual Report on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. European Commission Report. Published 2 March 2017, pp. 6-7. (Accessed 07 September 2017). Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/170302\\_facility\\_for\\_refugees\\_in\\_turkey\\_first\\_annual\\_report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/170302_facility_for_refugees_in_turkey_first_annual_report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Facility for refugees in Turkey: projects/committed/decided, contracted, disbursed. European Commission document. Published 6 September 2017. (Accessed 8 September 2017). Url: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility\\_table.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility_table.pdf)

Figure 3:



The manner in which the initial Facility funding mechanism is structured contains several implications: One – the full disbursement of funding will actually be slower than the time frame suggests; as previously described, EU member states will not finish paying their contributions into the Facility until 2019. Two – funding for new projects is privileged over support for pre-existing infrastructure. Three – governmental, non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations all compete for Facility funding.

In EU countries, a common misperception among the general public is that all Facility funding merge across many media outlets which perpetuated the misperception that the

## MISPERCEPTION OVER HOW FACILITY FUNDING IS DISBURSED

In EU countries, a common misperception among the general public is that all Facility funding is disbursed directly to the government of Turkey. While this perception is inaccurate, it is not surprising that it exists. A significant contributing factor to this confusion stems from public communications that European institutions have previously made about the Facility. Around the same time when the Facility was created, European institutions sent out various press releases. A cursory reading of these press releases could leave the reader with the erroneous impression that funding was all going to be given directly to the government of Turkey. A European Commission press release from 24 November 2015, for example, announces, “EU-Turkey Cooperation: A €3 billion Refugee Facility for Turkey”, while a European Council press release from 3 February 2016 states, “This agreement [EU-Turkey deal] puts into practice the

commitment made by the EU at its summit with Turkey on 29 November 2015 to provide €3 billion additional resources to assist Turkey...”.

Given the complex, multi-faceted nature of the EU-Turkey deal, it would not have been realistic to expect EU press releases to provide highly detailed explanations of the mechanics of the Facility. Furthermore, when these press releases were published, the Facility was an improvised response to an emergency situation, and therefore certain specifics of how it would function might not have been known at the time. Nonetheless, regardless of the summary nature of the press releases, EU media outlets turned to them as primary information sources for reporting news on the EU-Turkey deal. Consequently, a common theme began to emerge across many media outlets which perpetuated the misperception that the government of Turkey was slated to directly receive 3 billion euros from the Facility. *BBC News* for example announced, “Turkey will receive €3bn (£2.1bn) and political concessions in return for clamping down on its borders and keeping refugees in the country”; *Deutsche Welle* reported, “Turkey and the European Union (EU) have agreed on a plan to tackle the record influx of migrants into Europe. The bloc has promised Turkey 3 billion euros in aid money...”

## **HOW FACILITY FUNDING HAS BEEN DISBURSED – STATE OF PLAY AS OF JUNE 2017**

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When we examine how Facility funding has been disbursed to date, the data reveals a significant disparity between perception and reality. According to the latest data available (6 September 2017) published by the European Commission, the Facility has, to date, disbursed 838 million of its 3 billion euros in funding.

So far, four individually identifiable organizations have received the lion’s share of Facility disbursements: the World Food Programme, World Bank, UNICEF and UNHCR. The EU has disbursed funding to these organizations which are running various humanitarian and non-humanitarian aid projects inside of Turkey. All together these organizations have received 440 million euros as of 6 September 2017.

Figure 4:

<b><u>Funding Recipient</u></b>	<b><u>Funding (disbursed to date)</u></b>
World Food Programme (WFP)	310,400,000 €
World Bank (WB)	68,000,000 €
UNICEF	33,600,000 €
UNHCR	28,000,000 €
<b>Total</b>	<b>440,000,000 €<sup>6</sup></b>

Of the total 838 million euros of Facility funding disbursed to date, the government of Turkey has directly received 222 million euros. This direct funding has been disbursed in the following manner:

Figure 5:

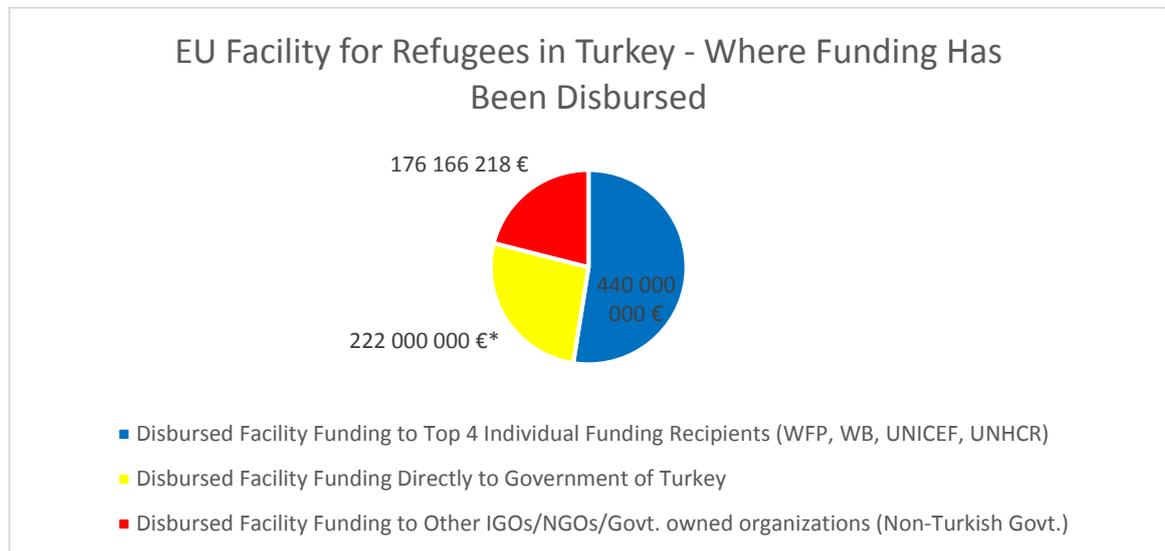
<b><u>Funding Recipient</u></b>	<b><u>Funding (disbursed to date)</u></b>
Turkish Ministry of Health	120,000,000 €
Turkish Ministry of National Education	90,000,000 €
Turkish Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM)	12,000,000 €
<b>Total</b>	<b>222,000,000 €<sup>7</sup></b>

Apart from the four organizations above and the direct funding to the government of Turkey, remaining disbursed Facility funding, 176 million euros, has been distributed to various IGOs, NGOs and government owned (non-Turkish government) organizations. The following graphic illustrates the overall state of Facility funding disbursements according to the latest published data from the European Commission (6 September 2017):

<sup>6</sup> Facility for refugees in Turkey: projects/committed/decided, contracted, disbursed. European Commission document. Published 6 September 2017. (Accessed 8 September 2017). Url: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility\\_table.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility_table.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Figure 6:



*\*At the conclusion of the initial period (2016-2017) of Facility disbursements, the government of Turkey is slated to directly receive 660 million total of the 3 billion Facility.<sup>8</sup>*

As we can ascertain from the data above, physical disbursement of funding has proceeded slowly, with the 838 million paid out representing approximately 28% of the total 3 billion Facility. Of the total 838 million distributed up to now, the government of Turkey has directly received approximately 26%.

## MISPERCEPTION, TENSIONS AND THE SECOND PERIOD OF THE FACILITY (2018)

The points highlighted above regarding disbursement of funding are important to consider in the context of continuing discussions regarding a potential prolongation of the Facility into a second period in 2018. As already highlighted at the beginning of this article, in late August 2017, European Commissioner for Budget, Günther Oettinger, called on EU member states to pledge more money from their national budgets to fund a potential extension of the Facility. The uncertain status of a 2018 continuation can be partially attributed to increased tensions in the EU-Turkey relationship in recent months, and a relevant contributing factor has been

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

misperception over how Facility funding is disbursed. Hopefully, in the coming months, the EU will pull together to ensure successful prolongation of the Facility into 2018. Ultimately, it should be recognized that the most important objective ought to be to ensure that essential aid continues to flow to Syrian refugees. The Facility is a vital mechanism for delivering aid and its continuity is something to strive for. ■

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