

TURKEY

Year 2019 in Review

A **Processing and Screening Centre** was established at the **Kuşadası Turkish Coast Guard** post in Aydın Kuşadası Marina with the support of UNHCR and in collaboration with the Turkish Coast Guard, Kuşadası District-Governorate and the Aydın Provincial Directorate of Migration Management. The two-floor screening and processing facility supports the pre-screening capacity of the border authorities to facilitate identification, assistance and referral of individuals with protection and other humanitarian needs, to support adequate and dignified reception conditions for, and timely processing of, intercepted, apprehended and rescued individuals.

Over **1,100 persons with specific needs were identified, assessed, counselled and referred to appropriate services** through municipal partners in cooperation with UNHCR in the Aegean region. Interventions were made for persons with medical needs, SGBV survivors, women at risk, LGBTI persons, children at risk, elderly individuals, single parents and persons in need of registration for temporary or international protection in Turkey.

In cooperation with the **Provincial Directorates of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, some 340 staff were trained on international protection** in İzmir, Aydın, Antalya, Kütahya, Denizli and Isparta. UNHCR placed special emphasis on reaching staff working with persons with specific needs, particularly refugee children and women at risk.

Update on Major Achievements in 2019



Refugee children flying kites with their local peers in celebration of World Refugee Day in Manisa in June 2019. ©UNHCR

Promoting Access to and Provision of Protection

Protection sensitive border management and cooperation with border actors: In the context of **mixed migration movements** towards Europe, the western sea border between Turkey and Greece remains an important border. The interception figures by the Turkish Coast Guard in 2019 indicate an increase of around 128 per cent compared to those of 2018, with the majority of interceptions or rescue operations occurring off the coast of İzmir (38 per cent) and Aydın (18 per cent).

In an effort to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of persons who were rescued, intercepted, apprehended and received by the Turkish Coast Guard, the Gendarmerie and the National Police, UNHCR delivered over 100,000 core relief items, including food packs, water, diapers, thermal clothing and hygiene kits to key border areas in the western Aegean sea borders of Turkey. The authorities were also supported in the identification and referral of persons with specific needs, and through interpreter support, counselling and information was provided to persons with protection needs on relevant procedures in Turkey. In addition, the reception conditions were improved in İzmir and Aydın with the provision of seven accommodation and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities. With the overall increase in the numbers of those attempting onward movement, the number of persons with specific needs identified among the intercepted and rescued persons, including individuals seeking international protection, unaccompanied children, persons with medical needs and pregnant women, has increased.

Strengthening Protection and Access to Quality Services of Refugees with Specific Needs

Child protection, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) prevention and response, identification of and social support to refugees with specific needs: In 2019, UNHCR **identified, assessed and counselled over 500 persons with specific needs** in the Aegean region who were referred to UNHCR's partners and service providers for necessary interventions. The majority comprised of Syrian, Afghan and Iranian nationals, including individuals with physical and mental disabilities, SGBV survivors, single parents, LGBTI persons, elderly, children at risk, including children involved in child labour and child marriage, women at risk and persons who were not as yet registered with Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMMs). Furthermore, in 2019, a total of 34 unaccompanied children who were intercepted at sea by the Turkish Coast Guard in İzmir were assisted and closely followed up by UNHCR and referred to appropriate public institutions, including the İzmir Provincial Directorate of Family, Labour and Social Services.

In an effort to strengthen the capacity of and enhance networks among NGO and UN partners in the Aegean region to better respond to the specific needs of persons at heightened risk, UNHCR organized several trainings with a focus on child protection, LGBTI and staff wellbeing. A three-day **Best Interests Procedures (BIP) and Child Protection training** was organized in İzmir on 9-11 September 2019 which brought together 31 caseworkers from IOM, WFP, the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), ASAM and Doctors of the World Association. The training aimed to develop the capacity of staff involved in Best Interests Procedures to undertake high quality best interests assessments and determinations, which are conducted by a panel of experts when particularly important decisions affecting a child need to take place. A two-day **Child Protection Assessment training** was organized for psychologists working with refugee children in İzmir on 21-23 December 2019, in collaboration with the Turkish Psychologist Association. In addition to the technical support provided to better assess child protection needs, the training aimed to broaden networks among psychologists from relevant public institutions, NGOs and UN agencies.

To sensitize civil society actors to the specific vulnerabilities and protection needs of LGBTI persons, UNHCR organized a **Workshop on Working with LGBTI individuals** in İzmir in 2019 with the support of an experienced psychiatrist. In total, 17 counsellors of various organizations participated. The participants were introduced to key concepts and terminologies, common concerns of LGBTI persons and non-discriminatory interviewing techniques. Furthermore, to enhance partner staff wellbeing, minimize burnout and increase productivity at the workplace, UNHCR organized a two-day **Staff Welfare and Self Care** training in İzmir with the support of a certified clinical psychologist.

In support of the **16 days of activism campaign against gender-based violence**, 45 youth from the refugee and host communities came together in İzmir through a series of ateliers to work on a collage in support of the 2019 global efforts to end gender-based violence at work. The collage was displayed in İzmir PDMM and at universities in İzmir. The activity was realized in cooperation with İzmir PDMM.

Cooperation with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS): In the Aegean region, efforts to improve the quality of services and promote the inclusion of vulnerable individuals into existing social and protection services were boosted in 2019. Working closely with the Provincial Departments of Family, Labour and Social Services, staff from İzmir, Aydın, Antalya, Kütahya, Denizli and Isparta took part in intensive **workshops on international protection**, including on the protection of refugee children and women, the national legal framework, birth registration, interviewing techniques with persons with specific needs and response to victims of human trafficking. Over 340 participants were reached from various Social Service Centers (SSC), Child Support Centres (ÇODEM), Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centres (ŞONM) and women shelters. The workshops allowed participants to engage in lively discussions, share experiences and challenges, particularly with regards to children at risk and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and to strengthen referral mechanisms among the different public institutions working with persons with specific needs.



PDofLSS staff engage in an ice-breaking session during the International Protection Workshop in Kütahya in April. ©UNHCR

Furthermore, in cooperation with the provincial authorities, UNHCR organized a two-day regional **Social Service Workshop** for SSC personnel in İzmir in August. A total of 34 participants, including social workers, interpreters and drivers, as well managers working across İzmir, Denizli, Muğla and Antalya attended the workshop. Participants were introduced to topics such as working with persons with specific needs, stress management, interpretation and interviewing techniques. Participants also had the opportunity to share their observations and experiences from the field and collectively brainstorm on solutions to identified problems.

Communication with Communities: In 2019, UNHCR consolidated its community-based approach in the Aegean region by supporting and intensifying communication with communities, including host communities, in order to engage them directly in the protection responses, to promote social cohesion and to strengthen access to services. Communication channels and tools used included focus group discussions (FGDs), information dissemination sessions, phone counselling, printed materials and digital platforms such as the [Services Advisor](#) and the [Help Website](#). Over 9,900 UNHCR-printed information materials were disseminated to refugee and host communities in 2019.

An extensive **regional participatory assessment** was carried out across urban and rural locations in 9 provinces in the Aegean region (İzmir, Denizli, Manisa, Uşak, Kütahya, Isparta, Burdur, Antalya, Muğla), which consisted of more than 50 Focus Group Discussions with over 470 refugees from diverse ages, backgrounds, genders and nationalities. This allowed UNHCR to obtain a comprehensive overview of the situation and protection concerns and needs and to hear solutions, proposed by the refugees. Discussions focused on livelihoods, education, SGBV, registration, health, social cohesion and access to information and communication channels. The participatory assessment was conducted in collaboration with various partners, including local and provincial counterparts and civil society actors. Language barriers were highlighted as an important challenge by most of the participants.



Syrian refugee children share their views on issues affecting their community during an FGD in Denizli in June. ©UNHCR

Information dissemination sessions were organized for refugees and teachers in İzmir on topics such as refugee rights, obligations and available services. Dedicated sessions on peer bullying were incorporated as part of efforts to contribute to social cohesion between refugee and local school children. Some 120 Syrian parents were reached through the information sessions held at the Recep Ercayın Elementary School in Buca District in cooperation with İzmir's Buca District Municipality and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC). Furthermore, 150 teachers working with refugee children across 72 public primary and secondary schools in İzmir's refugee hosting districts, including Konak, Karabağlar, Bornova, and Buca, attended the information sessions organized with the support of İzmir Provincial Directorates of National Education and of Migration Management and TRC. Participants exchanged experiences and good practices and brainstormed on solutions to identified context-specific challenges, particularly with regards to social cohesion issues in the school context.

Promoting Social Cohesion and Harmonization

Municipalities have played an important complementary role in meeting the increase in demand for services while fostering social cohesion among refugee and host communities. In cooperation with the Union of Aegean Municipalities (EBB), UNHCR organized a two-day **Aegean Region International Protection and Social Cohesion Workshop** in İzmir in December. High-level officials of 21 metropolitan and district municipalities including İzmir, İstanbul and Gaziantep attended the workshop, along with representatives from the Union of Municipalities of Turkey (TBB), the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM), the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the Ministry of National Education and academia. The workshop provided a unique consultative platform on social protection, social cohesion and livelihoods. The role of local governance was a major theme, and municipalities took the opportunity to discuss potential areas of cooperation on complementary service delivery for refugees.



İzmir Metropolitan Municipality Mayor, and President of EBB, Tunç Soyer, welcomes participants at the first Aegean Region International Protection and Social Cohesion Workshop in İzmir. ©UNHCR

UNHCR organized a three-day regional **Migration and Harmonization Workshop** for PDMMs on 26-28 August in İzmir in cooperation with DGMM and İzmir PDMM. In total, 35 participants, including the DGMM Deputy Director, the Director of the DGMM Harmonization and Communication Department, UNHCR's Representative in Turkey and PDMM Directors of seven provinces including İzmir, as well as migration experts from nine provinces attended the workshop. A variety of topics were covered, including protection, registration, and activities fostering social cohesion and harmonization. Academics from prominent universities in İzmir also contributed to the discussions. Participants had the opportunity to exchange experiences and best practices and to reach collective solutions to the identified challenges.

To support **youth engagement** and promote inter-community cohesion and dialogue, UNHCR conducted a number of activities for refugee and local youth across the Aegean region in 2019. A two-day **Youth Camp** was organized in Muğla in collaboration with Muğla PDMM, Yaşar University, Dokuz Eylül University, TOG, Research Centre on Asylum and Migration (IGAM), and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization (KOSGEB). A total of 32 youth from the refugee and host communities came together from eight provinces including İzmir where they engaged through role plays, film therapy and sessions on career and entrepreneurship skills building.



Refugee and local youth attend a youth camp in Muğla in September. ©UNHCR

As part of UNHCR's engagement with municipalities, a **cycling event** "Pedals turn into brotherhood" was organized in Manisa for refugee and local youth in cooperation with Manisa's Yunusemre District Municipality. The event brought together 26 youth from refugee and host communities to support youth engagement and promote social cohesion. UNHCR provided bicycles to the youth participants who cycled alongside experienced cyclists from the Manisa Cycling Sports Club Association.

Furthermore, a **football tournament** was organized in Isparta in December where 60 secondary school children from the refugee and host communities came together for a friendly football match at the Sehit Erkan Pala High School in Isparta. The tournament was realized in cooperation with the Social Service Association. A **film screening** was organized in Köyceğiz, Muğla, also in December where over 170 local youth and residents, watched the film Capharnaüm, featuring the story of a refugee boy's journey in a foreign country. The film screening aimed to raise awareness on forced displacement among the local youth.



Football tournament for refugee and local youth at Sehit Erkan Pala High School in Isparta. ©UNHCR

Engaging at the local level: In 2019, UNHCR stepped up efforts to deepen engagement and networks with local municipalities and key influences in the Aegean region, such as mukhtars and imams who often serve as first points of reference for new arrivals.

Manisa's Yunusemre District Municipality and the Social Service Association in Isparta signed Letters of Understanding with UNHCR in 2019. As a result, a **Refugee Support Desk** was established in Yunusemre to identify, assess and counsel persons with high protection risks and support referrals to appropriate services. Similarly, the Refugee Support Desk established in 2018 in cooperation with Izmir's Buca District Municipality continued to reach out to vulnerable individuals through protection outreach and counselling services, while also supporting local community actors such as mukhtars and teachers through information dissemination, counselling and interpretation support in 2019. Through the two refugee support desks in Izmir and Manisa supported by UNHCR, over 600 persons with specific needs, including SGBV survivors, women at risk, children at risk, persons with disabilities and other medical needs, were identified, assessed and referred to relevant services. Of those identified in Manisa Yunusemre, close to 90 vulnerable individuals from impoverished neighbourhoods received UNHCR-procured hygiene kits. Furthermore, through the cooperation with Izmir's Konak District Municipality, over 120 persons with specific needs were identified and referred to appropriate interventions, while 1,000 hygiene kits and 500 mold cleaning sets were delivered to venerable refugees and local community members across Konak District.

UNHCR organized three dedicated information dissemination sessions for **mukhtars** on international and temporary protection in Izmir, Uşak and Denizli, in cooperation with the PDMMs. Over 90 mukhtars from 83 neighbourhoods were reached, along with representatives of provincial directorates, district municipalities and the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (SASF). Similarly, an international protection workshop was organized for **imams** and Diyanet personnel in Kütahya in cooperation with the Provincial Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) on 10 April 2019. In total, 42 representatives from relevant provincial directorates, SASFs and civil society took part in the interactive sessions. The sessions served to raise awareness on refugee rights, obligations and available services among local community actors, as well as promote two-way communication and social cohesion among communities through exchange of experiences and brainstorming of solutions to identified challenges.

Moreover, Manisa PDMM and UNHCR co-organized a one-day workshop on **Cooperation with Local Actors in International Protection** in Manisa on 26 September 2019. Over 40 local and provincial authorities took

part in the workshop including the Manisa Metropolitan Municipality and Manisa's District Municipalities of Yunusemre, Şehzadeler, Saliqli, Akhisar and Turgutlu as well as provincial directorates of national education and health, İŞKUR, SASF and National Police. The workshop fostered mutual dialogue through exchange of experiences and challenges as well as discussions on potential areas of cooperation. Main cooperation areas focused on strengthening refugees' access to public services and enhancing social cohesion among refugee and host communities.

In 2019, over 400 local authorities and community leaders, including municipal staff, mukhtars, imams and teachers, benefited from interpretation and counselling services provided to local actors on refugee matters through the UNHCR-supported refugee support desk in İzmir's Buca district municipality. Through a project with the Social Service Association in Isparta, three separate seminars on substance addiction were organized for 306 refugee and host community members, in cooperation with the Süleyman Demirel University, and two handicraft courses were opened jointly with the Public Education Centre for 46 trainees from refugee and host communities.

A one-day training on international protection was organized in Manisa for 24 **municipal staff** of the district municipalities of Buca (İzmir) and Yunusemre (Manisa) on 16 December 2019. Sessions covered refugee rights, obligations, referral mechanisms and available services, with a focus on child protection and prevention and response to SGBV. Participants examined case studies and shared their experiences while dealing with refugees.

Working towards Durable Solutions

Education: The ability to communicate in Turkish is essential for meaningful social inclusion of refugees and social cohesion among communities residing in Turkey. Through UNHCR's cooperation with the Social Service Association in Isparta, 127 individuals from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia and Uzbekistan benefited from **Turkish language courses** at the Public Education Centre in Isparta. The courses provided an opportunity for adults and children to improve their Turkish language skills up to B1-level. Furthermore, 310 school children from refugee and local communities received UNHCR-procured stationery kits through cooperation with Manisa's Yunusemre district municipality.

Following the successful Training of Trainers **on teaching Turkish as a foreign language** for teachers in 2018, a second round was organized for 60 headmasters of public primary and secondary schools in Manisa on 7-8 September. The training, was organized in cooperation with the Manisa Governorate, PDMM, PDoNE and the Manisa Celal Bayar University Language Teaching Application and Research Centre (DIL-MER), to improve teaching methods and techniques in a refugee context and reduce language barriers among refugee children to encourage school enrolment and regular attendance.

Enhancing Partnerships and Communication

Interagency coordination: At the field level, UNHCR continued to coordinate the efforts to support Turkey's refugee response with partners to avoid duplication and gaps in international assistance. This was achieved through regular participation of UN agencies, NGOs and local actors, including relevant provincial directorates and municipalities, in the Inter-Sector Working Group meetings and other dedicated inter-agency coordination meetings held in İzmir.

Public information and communications: Academia brings valuable resources and knowledge on migration and refugee matters through research and studies which can be used to inform effective responses and policies. UNHCR therefore convened a consultative meeting with a wide range of academics from prominent universities in İzmir in 2019 to broaden networks, discuss research studies in the field of migration and social cohesion and explore potential areas of cooperation.

UNHCR also held a briefing for university students majoring in international relations at the Yaşar University in İzmir on 22 October 2019. Students were briefed on UNHCR’s mandate, operational activities, refugee rights and obligations as well as career opportunities at UNHCR.

In cooperation with Ege University, Faculty of Letters, İzmir PDMM, İzmir Governorate and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, UNHCR co-organized the “**First International Symposium on Arts and Humanities: International Migration and Migrant Experience Throughout History**” (EGEISAH) in İzmir on 12-14 December 2019. Over 50 local and international academics, along with university students, civil society and local actors contributed to 18 panel discussions covering a range of topics from the field of arts and humanities including forced displacement. Academics presented their research findings and recommendations and discussed novel and interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies in migration research.

A **youth festival** was organized in İzmir on 4 October 2019 where 500 refugee and host communities youth came together through workshops, dance and music sessions at the 9 Eylül University, in collaboration with TOG and İzmir PDMM.



Refugee and local youth engage through music at the Youth Fest in İzmir. ©UNHCR

Thanks to donors [for their support to UNHCR Turkey](#) in 2019

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