

ISSUE 11: FEBRUARY 2021

EMERGENCY SOCIAL SAFETY NET (ESSN)

Thanks to European Union funding and a partnership between the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRC), over 1.8 million refugees living in Turkey are receiving humanitarian support through monthly cash assistance.

February snapshots

 **1,809,899 individuals** reached with cash assistance

 **334,887,780 TRY** transferred to 319,751 households

 **2,840,912,000 TRY** transferred since April 2020

Highlights

First quarterly top-up of 2021 transferred

In addition to the regular monthly cash assistance, a total of 111,022,500 TRY was transferred to 1,809,899 ESSN recipients as the first quarterly top-up for 2021. The quarterly top-ups aim to address inequity between small and large refugee households, and to reduce the adverse risks to smaller households.

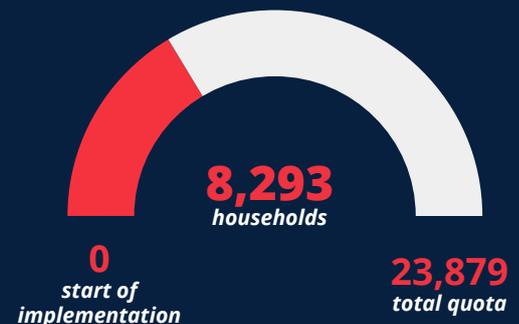
Innovative best practices by Halkbank staff

Some Halkbank branches have found new innovative ways to overcome challenges with obtaining the signatures of illiterate ESSN recipients. Refer to page 4 to find out more.

Sweepbacks: In February, the seventh sweepback of 813,459.05 TRY was made from 460 uncollected cards (226,060 TRY) and 748 dormant accounts (587,399.05 TRY). The total amount of transactions including February is 10,114,203.73 TRY.

SASF ALLOWANCE

A total of **32,959** individuals received ESSN assistance via the SASF allowance in February (34.7 per cent of total quota). Implementation of the SASF allowance has been steadily increasing since the beginning of the pandemic.



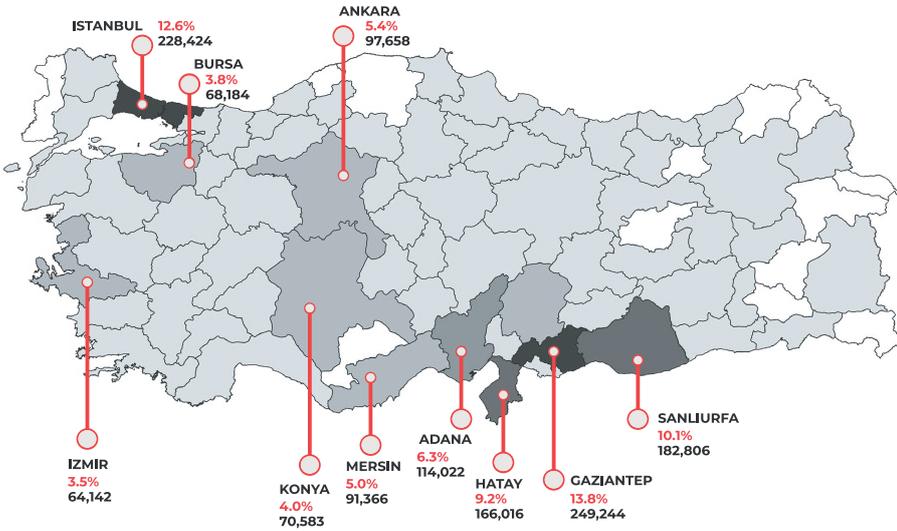
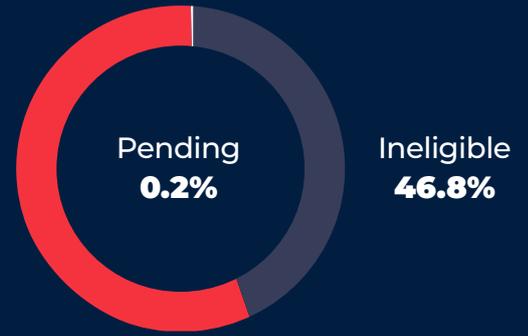
ESSN APPLICATIONS

In February, 3,087 household applications for the ESSN were received at SASF offices and TRC service centres. Application figures remain steady with no sudden increase or decrease.

39 per cent of February applications were received at TRC service centres and 61 per cent at SASF offices.

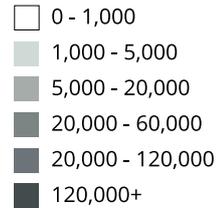
The total number of household applications received since the beginning of the ESSN is 608,364 with 36 per cent of total applications received at TRC service centres.

Eligible
53%



Province breakdown of ESSN recipients

Number of individuals



CRITERIA BREAKDOWN ¹



41.4%
households with four or more children



26.5%
households with high dependency ratio (≥1.5)



13.8%
households with single caregiver and children (<18)



9.3%
households with one or more individual with a disability



5.1%
single female



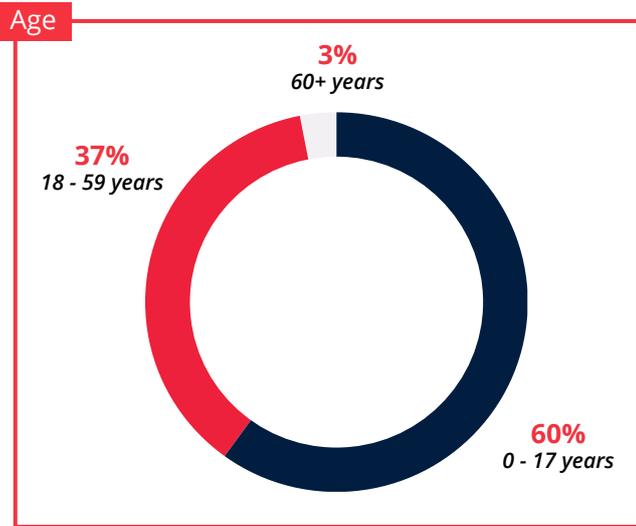
1.3%
elderly people above 60 with no other adults in the household

***2.6%** of households (8,293 HHs) receive ESSN assistance within the scope of the SASF allowance.

¹ 132,278 households with four or more children; 84,603 households with a dependency ratio equal to or above 1.5; 44,051 households with a single parent with no other adults and at least one child under 18; 29,884 households with at least one individual with a disability rate of 40%; 16,310 single females; 4,332 households with elderly people above 60 with no other adults in the household.



IN NUMBERS: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PEOPLE WE SERVE

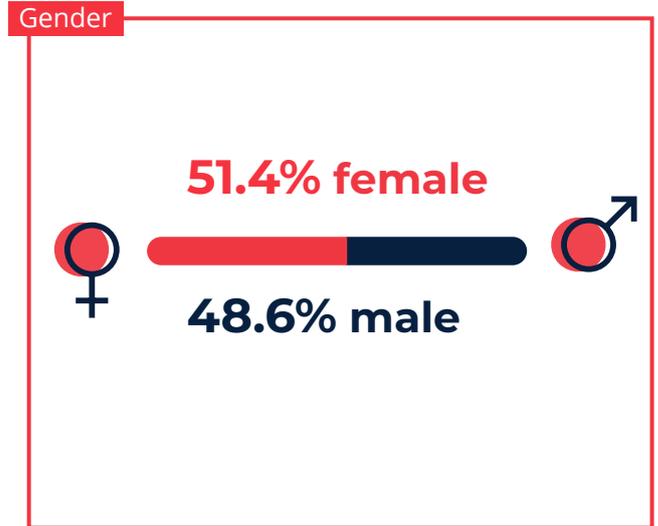


Age breakdown of ESSN recipients:

0 - 17 years: 1,081,169

18 - 59 years: 675,559

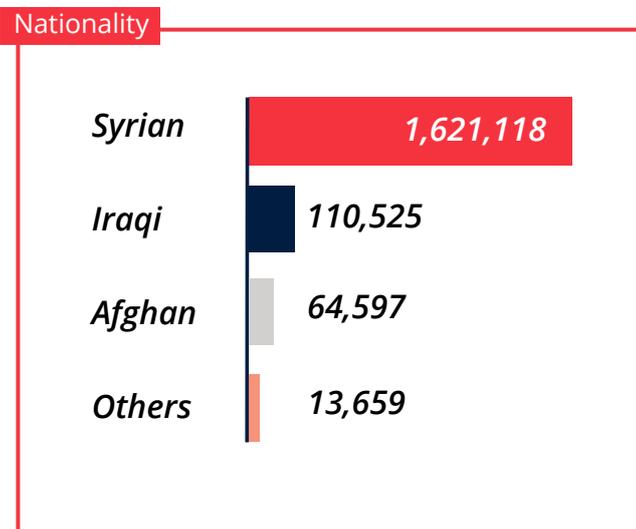
60+ years: 53,171



Gender breakdown of ESSN recipients:

Female: 929,884

Male: 880,015



Among the 'others' category are Iranian, Somali, Pakistani, Chinese, Palestinian and other nationals.



Individuals with a valid severe disability health report received an additional top-up of 600 TRY per individual, totalling 6,677,400 TRY for February.

CARD DISTRIBUTION MONITORING IN THE MIDST OF THE PANDEMIC

Card distribution monitoring is an activity conducted on a monthly basis to monitor card distribution at Halkbank branches and TRC service centres. Besides identifying potential reasons for uncollected cards and assessing the safety and security of the card distribution sites, the objectives of the activity are:

- To identify issues regarding accessibility, such as language barriers, travel distance to the distribution site, disabilities, protection concerns, risks and/or vulnerable groups.
- To identify levels of conformity to accountability to affected populations and whether ESSN recipients are receiving the correct information, and to assess whether they are satisfied with their experience at the distribution site.

KEY OBSERVATIONS:



Language barriers and illiteracy: ESSN recipients who do not speak Turkish cannot understand the procedures regarding card collection, and Halkbank staff are unable to respond to the inquiries of the recipients. Additionally, some Halkbank branches still struggle with illiterate refugees who cannot sign upon receiving their cards. A good practice observed at Halkbank branches involved Halkbank staff taking the fingerprints of recipients instead of their signatures.



PIN code issues: ESSN recipients are advised to change their PIN codes during their first transaction at the Halkbank branch. However, many recipients, especially elderly and illiterate people, often do not change their PIN codes and continuously visit the bank for a new PIN code. Because this may lead to overcrowding at the distribution sites, TRC and IFRC are working on developing mitigation measures including visuals and informative SMSs.



Large crowds: To avoid potential risks, TRC service centres have practices in place to manage crowds. ESSN recipients are accepted by the service centre staff paying attention that physical distancing and other necessary COVID-19 measures are adhered to. This is especially true for districts with a higher refugee density, such as Sahinbey in Gaziantep.

CONCLUSION:

- Halkbank branches and TRC service centres adhered to COVID-19 rules of physical distancing and measuring the temperatures of their visitors before allowing them in.
- Additional visuals for explaining the card distribution process and for changing PIN codes and using ATMs are currently under discussion to help Halkbank branches and ESSN recipients overcome the issues related to PIN codes.
- Taking fingerprints instead of signatures is a commendable creative solution employed by Halkbank branches to overcome the challenge of obtaining signatures from illiterate ESSN recipients.



PROGRAMMATIC HIGHLIGHTS

Monitoring and evaluation:

In February, the monitoring and evaluation team visited local institutions to observe the implementation of the programme under the the circumstances of COVID-19. In general, SASF allowance issues came up during the visits, with language barriers continuing to cause problems. To overcome this, applicants visiting the institutions have resorted to bringing family members who speak Turkish with them. Card distribution monitoring was also conducted in the last week of February at Halkbank branches and TRC service centers. The distribution process continued to run smoothly in all visited institutions.

Referral and outreach:

The referral and outreach unit is actively working to remove barriers faced by the target population in accessing the ESSN, and to raise the awareness of authorities about developments to the programme. To ensure the programme continues to run smoothly, it is important to closely cooperate with the authorities as they are the first point of contact by the target population. Advocacy and sensitization activities are planned and carried out on a routine basis to remove barriers the target population faces in accessing ESSN assistance. Within this context, in February the referral and outreach unit visited 393 authorities located in 38 provinces and advocated for 97 access issues.

Coordination:

TRC and IFRC conducted the bimonthly stand-alone ESSN Task Force meeting for Istanbul and Izmir, where monthly highlights for ESSN and CCTE were shared and participants' feedback and inquiries responded

to. ESSN rumour tracking and management system was the thematic topic of the meeting. TRC and IFRC introduced the module and walked the audience through its usage steps. There was also a brief announcement about the C-ESSN and more details were promised for the upcoming meetings. Additionally, TRC and IFRC attended BNWG national (Ankara) and field (Istanbul-Gaziantep) meetings, where ESSN updates for the respective regions were delivered.

Accountability to affected populations:

In February:

- 14,767 calls were responded to through 168 call centre
- 686, 690 SMSs were sent out;
- 257 questions were replied to through Facebook;
- 164 questions were replied to through the Kızılaykart website.

Preparation for the online SASF workshop, to be held in the second and last weeks of March, was finalised. This workshop aims to provide updates on the ESSN.

Protection training:

A basics protection training entitled "The Foundation of Protection: principles and standards" launched in the last week of January and continued throughout February. Approximately 90 staff from service centres and outreach teams attended the training. According to the referral and outreach workstream analysis, the number of referrals of protection cases is increasing especially referrals from service centres.