

#PowerToBe campaign launches to help shift perceptions of refugees

- **IFRC and EU support over 1.5 million refugees in Turkey through the world's biggest humanitarian cash programme, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)**
- **The programme is providing a lifeline to vulnerable refugees amidst the COVID-19 pandemic through regular cash assistance**
- **The #PowerToBe campaign showcases how cash assistance helps refugees in Turkey regain control of their lives and how connecting through shared passions brings people together**

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The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has launched a campaign to tackle negative perceptions of refugees at an increasingly critical time across Europe.

The #PowerToBe campaign follows four passionate Syrians living in Turkey – Hiba, a musician, Eslam, an illustrator, Ibrahim, a swimmer and Mohammed, a coffee lover – who are regaining control of their lives through the help of monthly cash assistance funded by the EU, ultimately giving them more power to be themselves.

The four protagonists each meet digitally with influential people from Germany, Italy, Sweden, Turkey, Portugal and Poland who share a common passion for music, art, water sports and coffee. The campaign shows how people from all walks of life can connect with one another at eye-level despite differences in language or backgrounds.

In the #PowerToBe campaign, fifteen-year-old drawer Eslam speaks to well-known German illustrator Steffen Kraft, Italian street artist and painter Alice Pasquini and Swedish street artist Johan Karlgren about her passion for illustration. "Drawing a lot helped me to show the world, even if only a little, what happened in Syria," Eslam said.

Ibrahim, who became paralyzed during the conflict in Syria, connects with Polish professional high diver, Kris Kolanus about the freedom and boundlessness they both feel in the ocean. "Even though many things can hinder me, I am trying to do something. For next year, I'm preparing myself to swim the competition across the Bosphorus."

Mohammed, a father of two, talks to Turkish coffee bean suppliers Hasibe and Ümit about his passion and memories associated with coffee. "When we came to Turkey to an empty house, we had nothing at all. Some Turkish brothers helped us, gave us some furniture." They tasted his coffee and told him it was "the best they've ever had".

Hiba, who now attends a music school in Istanbul, connected with Portuguese singer-songwriter April Ivy, whom she wrote and sang a song with. "I like to give people hope because whatever struggles we go through, there are actually nice things happening as well," Hiba says.

Turkey is currently home to the world's largest refugee population with almost four million who are trying to rebuild their lives. About 3.7 million of those are Syrians who fled the conflict that has devastated their country.

Funded by the European Union, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) is the biggest humanitarian programme in the history of the EU and provides monthly cash assistance via debit cards to nearly 1.5 million vulnerable refugees in Turkey. The ESSN is implemented by the Turkish Red Crescent and the IFRC in coordination with the Government of Turkey.

The cash assistance helps give refugees some relief from an exceptionally challenging year where many are facing deepening debt and poverty due to the secondary impacts of COVID-19. Cash assistance helps give people like Hiba, Eslam, Mohammed and Ibrahim freedom and dignity to decide for themselves how to cover essential needs like rent, transport, bills, food, and medicine. At the same time, it provides the opportunity to invest back into communities that host them, supporting the local Turkish economy.

Jagan Chapagain, IFRC Secretary General, says: "This year we have seen vulnerable refugee communities slip further into hardships, but we also see their hope and strength. Through this campaign, we wanted to highlight the contributions and resilience they have despite all the challenges. When given the right support, refugees' potential is endless."

Janez Lenarčič, EU Commissioner for Crisis Management, says: "Hiba, Eslam, Ibrahim and Mohammed were forced to leave everything behind, but have held on to their dreams and continued to pursue them with passion.

The ESSN programme offers a critical lifeline to them and 1.5 million other vulnerable refugees in Turkey, many of whom have been especially hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic. We are proud to see the tangible difference it makes by giving them the opportunity to make choices for their lives."

More information

About the campaign: The campaign has been developed by the Berlin based agency Social Social and will launch 18 January 2022 in all six countries - Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey. It builds on the success of the 2021 #PowerToBe campaign raising awareness about refugees' situations and the ESSN programme in Austria, Denmark, France, Romania, Spain, The Netherlands and Turkey.

European Union: The European Union and its Member States are the world's leading donor of humanitarian aid. Relief assistance is an expression of European solidarity with people in need all around the world. It aims to save lives, prevent and alleviate human suffering, and safeguard the integrity and human dignity of populations affected by disasters and crises. Through its Civil Protection and Humanitarian aid Operations department (ECHO), the European Union helps millions of victims of conflict and disasters every year. With headquarters in Brussels and a global network of field offices, the EU provides assistance to the most vulnerable people on the basis of humanitarian needs.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, reaching 150 million people in 192 National Societies, including Turkish Red Crescent, through the work of 13.7 million volunteers. The IFRC acts before, during and after disasters to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. The IFRC has been leading large-scale cash programmes for decades in response to a broad spectrum of disasters around the globe.

The Turkish Red Crescent (Türk Kızılay) is the largest humanitarian organization in Turkey, helping people to withstand crises, both in the country and abroad. The TRC has been providing first-line response to the refugee influx since it began, supporting millions of people in camps and urban settings. Through their leading cash team and the "Kızılaykart" debit card, the TRC supports millions of vulnerable refugees and Turkish communities to cover their basic needs.

The Turkish Red Crescent, IFRC and EU work in coordination with the Government of Turkey and its Ministry of Family and Social Services. The Government of Turkey is an important partner of the Emergency Social Safety Net programme, which is linked to the existing social system in Turkey. The country hosts the world's largest number of refugees, and the Turkish Government plays a leading role, with regards to the response to the Syria crisis.

For more information or to arrange an interview

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More information

About the ESSN digital campaign, visit:
powertobe.ifrc.org/en

Download videos and photos of the campaign here:
[Download all videos](#)

Influencers of the campaign

Turkey	Hasibe Çeliker & Ümit Çeliker	Coffee Lover
Germany	Steffen Kraft	Artist
Italy	Alice Pasquini	Artist
Sweden	Johan Karlgren	Artist
Portugal	April Ivy	Musician
Poland	Kris Kolanus	Sports

People receiving ESSN assistance

Eslam / Drawing



Pencil and paper - that's all Eslam needs for her sketches. During the war, drawing was her only refuge. In Syria, Eslam had to hide in a cellar before she and her family could flee to Turkey. Today, drawing is still her greatest passion. It's how she processes her experiences and keeps the memory alive: "Drawing helps me show the world - even if just a little bit - what happened in Syria." The debit card helps Eslam and her family buy what they desperately need - including her school supplies. What is Eslam's big dream? An exhibition of her own! She opens up about her hopes and ambitions with artists from across Europe in the #PowerToBe campaign - namely Johann from Sweden, Steffen from Germany and Alice from Italy. Through their exchange via video calls and messages, together they create joint works of art.

Hiba / Music



Hiba loves to sing and even writes her own songs mostly about love, pain and her dreams. Music is not only Hiba's passion, it is also what gives her hope. Hiba grew up in Syria. Her schooling ended abruptly with the civil war and her subsequent move to Istanbul. Here she finds confidence in music and attends a music school. Her teacher gave Hiba her first guitar which she feels is her most valued possession. Things have not been easy for Hiba's family. However, the financial hardships are alleviated by the debit card assistance. What is Hiba's motivation? "I want to give people hope. Because no matter how difficult the situation seems, beautiful things always happened." She talks about her dream of becoming a musician in her video call with singer April Ivy from Portugal - her first European fan.

Ibrahim / Sports



When Ibrahim swims, he uses only his arms and the movement of the water to do so. This is because Ibrahim became a paraplegic after a sniper in Syria shot him. He had no choice but to leave everything behind in his home country of Syria and flee. The debit card helps him pay his essential bills, because Ibrahim cannot work with his disability. In Istanbul, he volunteers at a center for disabled children and swims whenever he can. Swimming really makes him feel free, even from his wheelchair. He talks about the boundlessness of the ocean in video messages with Kris from Poland and about his next big goal: to train and swim the Bosphorus Cross-Continental Swim competition.

Mohammed / Coffee



Mohammed loves to drink coffee. He prepares it with cardamom and cloves, because the smell reminds him of his homeland, Syria. Because of the war, Mohammed had to flee with his family to Istanbul. Here, his Turkish neighbors helped him and his family to move in, organize furniture and tasted his Arabic coffee. "The best they've ever had" is how Mohammed tells it. To pay the rent, he can rely on the debit card benefits. Whenever he can, Mohammed spends time with his children and shows them around Istanbul. Their education is the most important thing to him. He always checks over their homework. As part of the campaign, Mohammed also exchanges ideas with Hasibe and Ümit from Turkey. Of course, it's all about one thing: coffee.

Influencers being part of the campaign

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Germany

Steffen Kraft is the founder of Iconeo Design Studio. He is known for his work as a creative communication designer, photographer and illustrator. Steffen was born in Heidelberg, Germany but now lives in Wiesbaden where he continuously explores new ways to identify challenges facing society, and reimagine a better world through his art. Steffen's work mainly focuses on culture, social affairs, sustainability and education.

www.instagram.com/iconeo



Italy

Alice Pasquini is a Roman street artist and celebrated painter, as well as an illustrator and set designer. Her preferred canvases are city walls. Alice's artwork is seen on urban surfaces and walls, but also in galleries and museums in over 100 cities around the world including Sydney, New York, Moscow, Paris, Marrakech, Berlin, Ho Chi Minh City and London.

www.instagram.com/alicepasquini



Portugal

April Ivy, also known by her real name Mariana Barreiros Dos Santos Gonçalves, is a Portuguese singer-songwriter from Lisbon, Portugal. Along with singing and composing her own music, Mariana plays the piano and the guitar. In February 2016, Mariana composed and released "Be Ok" as an independent artist which reached the top of national radio's airplay list, and even topped the national Spotify, YouTube and iTunes charts.

www.instagram.com/aprilivymusic/



Sweden

Johan Karlgren, also known by his artist name Pappas Pärlor, is a Swedish pop culture artist. Johan creates distinctive interactive art in the form of beads to produce a pixelated-esque aesthetic reminiscent of old video games. Using everyday surroundings as a canvas, Johan creates pop-culture figures and silhouettes which are installed in subtle places all around the world, making his surroundings more fun.

www.instagram.com/pappasparlor



Poland

Kris Kolanus is a professional high diver who competes internationally for Poland. Kris has been competing for many years in the world's top events organised by FINA and Red Bull. Kris found victory in the men's cliff diving during the Cliff Diving World Series in Texas in 2018.

www.instagram.com/kris_kolanus



Turkey

Hasibe and Ümit own coffee shop, Hello People Coffee. They are from Turkey and live on the road in a caravan. They love everything analogue and old - even timeless - like coffee. Hasibe and Ümit see the world as a very fast-moving place and in today's busy lifetime on earth, people should slow down and allow themselves to take the time to return to themselves.

www.instagram.com/hellopeople.co