

TURKEY

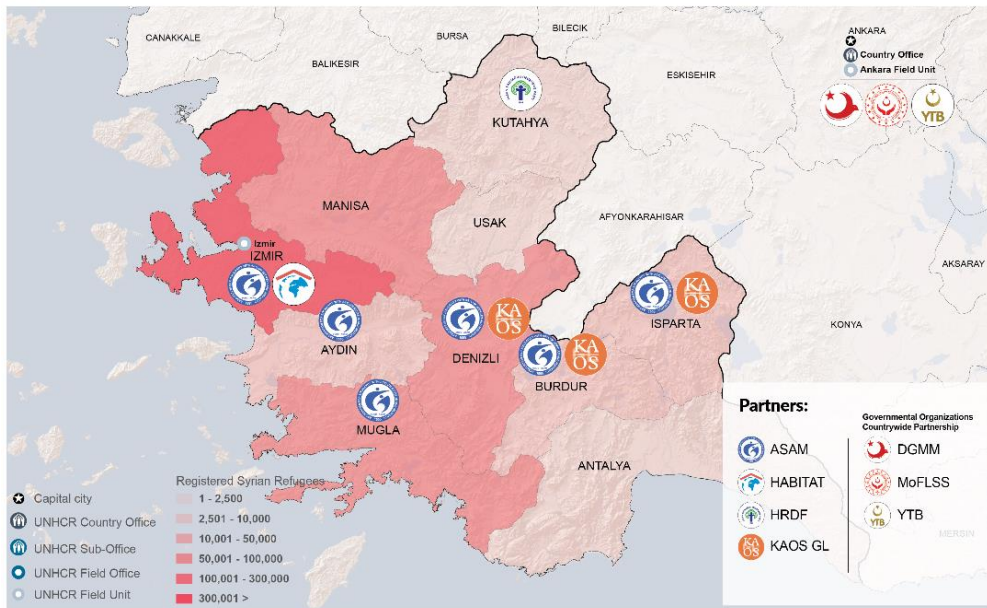
Year 2018 – Operational Update

Almost **200 staff of the Provincial Directorates of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services were trained on international protection** in İzmir and Muğla. UNHCR placed special emphasis on reaching staff working with persons with specific needs, particularly refugee children and women at risk.

Close to **100 protection monitoring missions and visits** were conducted in the Aegean region. UNHCR focused most of its visits on identification of and advocacy on protection issues affecting refugees and asylum-seekers.

Around **45,450 individuals received core relief items** in the western Aegean border region and **20 accommodation and WASH facilities** were installed in key border areas in İzmir and Aydın.

Operational Context



UNHCR and partner presence in İzmir Field Office's area of operation.

UNHCR's İzmir Field Office promotes and supports access to and provision of protection and quality services for asylum-seekers and refugees in the Aegean region, including İzmir. The Aegean is located in the south-western part of Turkey with around 12 million inhabitants, and hosts a considerable number of urban refugee population with an estimated 257,000 persons of concern. UNHCR's İzmir Office covers 10 provinces including İzmir, Aydın, Muğla, Manisa, Denizli, Uşak, Kütahya, Isparta, Burdur and Antalya.

The coastal provinces along the Aegean (İzmir, Aydın, Muğla and Antalya) are also relevant border regions for often irregular movements by sea. To support protection-sensitive border management and delivery of immediate humanitarian assistance to intercepted, apprehended and rescued persons, UNHCR works in cooperation with relevant border authorities and national institutions in charge of managing Turkey's borders, including the Turkish Coast Guard, the Gendarmerie General Command and the National Police.



Refugee children gather with their local peers in Izmir to mark World Refugee Day on 27 June 2018.
© UNHCR

Provincial and local institutions and service providers are provided with material and technical support to strengthen their ability to meet the increased demand in services, particularly by the most vulnerable refugees. As such, UNHCR places special attention on the identification of, and response to, persons with specific needs, enhanced protection monitoring and strengthened referrals to public service providers to support access to effective protection. By widening its networks with partners and key influencers at the local level, such as municipalities, mukhtars and imams, in locations hosting high numbers of refugees, UNHCR consolidates communication, between refugees and host communities as well as refugees and service providers. UNHCR also promotes social cohesion among refugee and host communities, and enhances

awareness on the rights and obligations of refugees. Municipalities are strongly supported in their efforts to include refugees in municipal assistance and distribution schemes, and their access to local representation mechanisms. In addition, the participation of local authorities in discussions with humanitarian actors operating on the refugee response in the region is also promoted through established inter-agency coordination mechanisms such as the Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG). Co-chaired by UNHCR and IOM, the ISWG convenes on a regular basis in Izmir and provides an important forum for discussion on key and cross-cutting protection, basic needs and health issues as well as education and livelihoods. The ISWG promotes good practices, develops harmonized approaches to the response and addresses challenges faced, in support of refugees and asylum seekers in the Aegean region.

Update on Major Achievements in 2018

Promoting Access to and Provision of Protection

Protection sensitive border management and cooperation with border actors: Within the context of the **mixed migration movements** towards Europe, the Western Sea border between Turkey and Greece remained an important border region in 2018. The interception figures by the Turkish Coast Guard (TCG) in 2018 indicate an increase of 22 per cent compared to those of 2017, with the majority of incidents occurring off the coast of Izmir (57 per cent) and Aydin (15 per cent). This situation called for continued UNHCR support to meet the growing needs of persons who are rescued, intercepted, apprehended and received by the TCG, Gendarmerie and the National Police. Thus, immediate humanitarian assistance, including core relief and food items, was provided, as well as interpreter support. The authorities were also supported in the identification and referral of persons with specific needs, and information and counselling was provided to persons with protection needs on relevant procedures. In addition, close to 45,450 individuals received core relief items from partners across the western Aegean border region. Moreover, the reception conditions were improved at border areas in Izmir and Aydin with the provision of 20 accommodation and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities.

Strengthening Access to Quality Services for Refugees through Public Systems and National and Local Institutions

Advocacy and support inclusion of refugees in national systems: In 2018, close to 100 **protection monitoring missions and visits** were conducted to the provinces within the Izmir Field Office's area of operation. These missions helped to identify and address protection issues affecting refugees and asylum-seekers in the Aegean region, and keep abreast of protection trends and gaps. They also served as an opportunity to broaden UNHCR's networks and step-up its advocacy efforts on protection challenges with key state institutions. Productive discussions took place with the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMM), Provincial Directorates of Family, Labour and Social Services (PDoFLSS), Provincial Directorates of National Education (PDoNE) and Provincial Directorates of Health (PDoH), among others. Special focus was placed on strengthening national referral mechanisms for persons with specific needs to enable their access to appropriate services, and advocate for their prioritization, particularly with regard to registration and access to social and protective services.

Child protection, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) prevention and response, identification of and social support to refugees with specific needs: Two **Best Interests Procedures (BIP)** workshops were organized for the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) in İzmir, with the participation of 28 staff working in İzmir, Muğla and Aydın provinces. The workshops aimed to develop the capacity of partner staff involved in the BIP process to produce high quality Best Interests Assessments and Best Interests Determinations, which are conducted by a panel of experts when particularly important decisions affecting a child need to take place.



Refugee women take part in a zumba dance activity in support of the 16 Days of Activism against SGBV campaign in İzmir on 20 December 2018. © UNHCR

A **psychologist support group** was established for psychologists working for ASAM in İzmir and Muğla as part of UNHCR's ongoing efforts to improve the psychosocial services for refugees. In this light, six peer support and supervision sessions were organized between July and October 2018 for the psychologists to build networks, share experiences and receive expert guidance on response mechanisms regarding complex protection cases including child protection.

Two rounds of **staff welfare and self-care** trainings were organized for 28 ASAM staff in November 2018. The sessions were facilitated with the support of a certified clinical psychologist to enhance staff wellbeing, minimize burnout and increase productivity in the workplace.

Cooperation with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS): The cooperation with provincial directorates (PDoFLSS) was strengthened in 2018, which helped UNHCR step up support for the inclusion of refugees into existing social and protection services, with a focus on social assistance, child protection and support to persons with specific needs. PDoFLSS staff in İzmir and Muğla provinces took part in six capacity development **trainings on international protection**, including on the protection of refugee children and women, on the national protection legal frameworks, birth registration and response to victims of human trafficking. A total of 196 participants were reached from various social service centres, child support centres, violence prevention and monitoring centres and other key PDoFLSS institutions working with persons with specific needs. The trainings provided participants with an opportunity to enhance awareness on refugee rights and obligations, as well as engage in lively discussions and share some of their experiences and challenges when serving refugees, particularly with regard to children at risk and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. In addition, participants received UNHCR information documents on child labour, child abuse and alternative care arrangements, and FAQs for Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Engaging at the local level (municipalities, governor offices, imams, and mukhtars): In 2018, UNHCR broadened its networks and collaborations with the various local municipalities in the Aegean region to expand outreach to persons at heightened risk and raise awareness on refugee rights and obligations to dispel misinformation, integrate refugees into the existing **municipal services** and promote social cohesion. At the community level, local authorities have overall had a positive approach towards refugees, and some authorities have shown great solidarity and initiative to enhance access to services, mediate social tensions and promote social cohesion.

İzmir's Konak and Buca district municipalities signed Letters of Understanding with UNHCR in 2018. As a result, a **Refugee Support Desk** was established in the Buca district municipality to identify persons with high protection risks and support referrals to relevant institutions, as well as provide counselling and translation services to local community leaders such as mukhtars, municipal staff and school teachers on matters concerning refugees. In the Konak district municipality, a project was established to support impoverished and refugee-dense neighbourhoods by providing family hygiene kits, mold cleaning sets and medical equipment such as wheelchairs.



Municipal staff from İzmir's Konak district municipality engage in a discussion during the Needs Assessment and Case Management training in İzmir. © UNHCR

A **Needs Assessment and Case Management training** was organized in November 2018 for 40 municipal staff to enhance outreach to and identification of persons with heightened risks, and raise awareness on refugee rights, obligations and referral mechanisms.

Two **international protection workshops** were organized in İzmir and Aydın in partnership with the Provincial Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyamet) to raise awareness on refugee rights, obligations and available services, as well as promote two-way communication and social cohesion among refugee and host communities. Over 180 representatives from relevant provincial and local institutions, academia and civil society were reached, including from the Diyanet, PDMs, imams, mukhtars, PDoFLSS, Aydın Governor's Offices, Provincial Directorate of Social Studies and Projects, Turkish employment agency (İŞKUR), Social Assistance Solidarity Foundation, Turkish Red Crescent and Adnan Menderes University Foreign Students' Community. Participants made valuable contributions on their role and activities supporting refugees. The workshops provided a unique opportunity for mutual dialogue and information sharing on best practices and to brainstorm solutions to problems and challenges identified in the field concerning refugees and their host communities. Some of the concerns shared included persistent child labour, child marriages, informal employment, particularly among agricultural seasonal workers, and language barriers. The discussions were complemented with dedicated sessions on topics such as the national temporary and international protection legal frameworks and UNHCR's approach to refugee protection. Key institutions also made valuable contributions on their role and activities supporting refugees at the provincial and local levels.

Social cohesion: In cooperation with the Union of Aegean Municipalities and Turkish Association of Social Workers (TASW), UNHCR organized the first **Social Service and Cohesion Camp** for municipal staff in İzmir's Çeşme district. In total, 49 representatives from different metropolitan and district municipalities and six TASW branch offices (in İzmir, Aydın, Manisa, Muğla, Denizli and Antalya provinces) attended the two-day workshop. The workshop supported the capacity development of municipal staff working in social services on topics such as refugee rights, international and national protection framework. Participants also worked in groups to identify gaps in service provision, map services and referrals provided by the municipalities.



Refugee volunteers discuss their communities' challenges encountered by in Manisa. © UNHCR

In cooperation with Manisa's Yunusemre district municipality, two information and discussion sessions were organized end of 2018 for **refugee volunteers** who are actively supporting their communities within the municipality. A total of 44 refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq were informed about refugee rights, services and referral mechanisms. Refugee volunteers also highlighted some of the gaps and challenges they encountered within their communities. The sessions aimed to enhance community-based protection mechanisms by promoting refugees' engagement in identifying and developing solutions to the challenges as well as strengthen two-way communication among the refugee and host communities.

Education: A two-day **Training of Trainers** was organized for 70 Turkish language and form teachers working with refugee children in public primary schools across Manisa in December 2018. The event was organized in cooperation with the Manisa Governorate, PDoNE and Celal Bayar University to improve teachers' teaching skills and reduce language barriers among refugee children to encourage school enrolment and regular attendance.

Promoting and Preparing Durable Solutions for Refugees

Self-reliance and livelihoods support: In partnership with the İzmir Governorate, UNHCR launched the first **Textile Machine Operator Training and Harmonization Center** in İzmir's Karabağlar district. Close to 84 refugees and host community members took part in two rounds of the shirt sewing machine operator vocational training programme between January and July 2018 with 90 per cent attendance rate and over 50 per cent participation of women thanks to the children's day-care specifically designed to encourage women's participation. Turkish language courses were also incorporated in the training module to facilitate refugees' access to the labour market. More than

half of the graduates were referred to different employers in the textile industry for potential job placements, with an estimated employment rate of 20 per cent. The project was realized with the joint efforts of the Governorate of İzmir, the Provincial Directorate of National Education, the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management, the Union of İzmir Chambers of Craftsmen and Tradesmen, İzmir Chamber of Shirt Manufacturers Tricot and Similar Craftsmen and Tradesmen, ASAM, Egedeniz Textile and İŞKUR.

Monitoring the voluntary nature of self-organized returns: In cooperation with the İzmir PDMM, UNHCR started to monitor the voluntary nature of spontaneous returns involving Syrian refugees in August 2018 by observing and providing interpretation support to the return interviews conducted by PDMM.



Syrian refugees learn shirt sewing in preparation for their job placement in the textile industry. © UNHCR

Cross-cutting Support

Interagency coordination: Following a survey conducted in late 2017 with UN and NGO partners, UNHCR successfully consolidated the existing coordination structure in İzmir throughout 2018 in line with the changing operational context and needs. Some of the proposals adopted include transition to thematic group meetings and solution-based discussions, strengthened sector leadership and broader participation among government actors and academia.

Communication with communities: To enhance communication with refugee communities, 134 refugees from diverse ages, genders and backgrounds took part in 16 dedicated focus group discussions (FGDs) across 5 provinces in the Aegean region (İzmir, Aydın, Denizli, Manisa and Uşak). The FGDs aimed to identify protection gaps and underlying causes in access to information, rights and services and hear refugees' proposed solutions. The discussions focused on an array of topics including livelihoods, SGBV and access to information and communication channels.

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