



8.7.2022

# MISSION REPORT

following the Committee on Budgets' mission to Turkey, 23-25 May 2022

Committee on Budgets

Members of the mission:

Niclas Herbst	(PPE) (Leader of the mission)
Eider Gardiazabal Rubial	(S&D)
Bogdan Rzońca	(ECR)

Accompanying Member - Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Elena Yoncheva	(S&D)
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# **BUDG mission to Turkey**

**23-25 May 2022**

## **Mission Report**

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## I. Overview of the mission



### Introduction

The objective of this mission was to review the implementation of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (hereinafter 'the Facility'). It aimed to learn more about the concrete use of EU financial support, assessing the quality of implementation and effectiveness on the ground, and evaluating future needs for refugee assistance in the region through the Union budget.

Three BUDG Members participated in the mission, Mr Niclas HERBST (EPP) as Head of the mission, Ms Eider GARDIAZÁBAL RUBIAL (S&D) and Mr Bogdan RZONCA (ECR). One Member from the LIBE Committee, Ms Elena YONCHEVA (S&D), accompanied the mission.

Over the two and a half days of the mission, the Members encountered organisations on the ground such as UNICEF, UN Women, ICMPD, among others, and the Journalist Association/Press House in Ankara. They also had the opportunity to meet and discuss with some key political counterparts such as Ms Fatma Öncü, Deputy Minister to the Family and Social Services Ministry as well as with Mr Cevdet Yilmaz, Chairman of the Budget and Planning Committee of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

Cooperation with the EEAS and, in particular, the EU Ambassador and his team was excellent, both in terms of logistical support - before and during the mission - and of political advice on the ground. The EU Delegation rapport with relevant communities enabled Members to have a very concrete view on the ongoing projects and possible future challenges.

### Background information - the Facility for Refugees in Turkey

The total budget coordinated by the Facility is EUR 6 billion, mobilised in two tranches.

The first tranche amounted to EUR 3 billion, of which EUR 1 billion was mobilised from the EU budget and EUR 2 billion in bilateral contributions from the Member States. Likewise, the second tranche amounted to EUR 3 billion, of which the EU budget provided EUR 2 billion and the Member States EUR 1 billion.

As concerns EU budget resources, of the EUR 1 billion from the EU budget for 2016-2017, EUR 250 million was mobilised in 2016 and EUR 750 million in 2017. Of the EUR 2 billion from the EU budget for 2018-2019, EUR 550 million was mobilised in 2018, with the balance mobilised in 2019.

By 31 December 2020, the Commission had contracted the full operational envelope of the Facility. In April 2022, out of a total of EUR 6 billion, more than EUR 4.6 billion has been disbursed.

## Conclusions

### On EU-Turkey relationships:

- Turkish authorities and local communities have also put a tremendous effort in response to the massive presence of refugees in its territory; around 98% of the Syrian refugees and asylum seekers residing in Turkey are living in urban areas since several years, outside of refugee camps;
- We noted however during the mission that the very large number of refugees has had a significant impact on the host communities. It is posing increasing challenges on social cohesion between refugees, migrants and host communities, especially in a context characterised by the economic downturn and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market.
- The ongoing financial and economic crisis in Turkey is now even more increasing the pressure both on the refugee communities and on the local population. Despite the increase of the minimum wage, the impact of the crisis on low and middle income is tremendous; refugees are at the front line with only 2% of them working in registered employment. For this reason, the EU calls for more long-term labour strategy for the refugees in Turkey;
- Public pressure over the refugees' presence in Turkey is increasing in view of the economic situation and next year's presidential and parliamentary elections. The question of sending refugees back in Syria to so-called "safe zones" on the Turkey-Syria border will be part of the electoral discussions. In this context, Turkish authorities expressed the wish for the EU to include costs for resettlements in Syria in the scope of the Facility. On this topic, the well known criteria established by the UNHCR continue to guide EU efforts. EU support for returns would only be possible on condition that they are confirmed to be voluntary, safe and dignified. European Commission's recent discussions with UNHCR suggest these conditions are not met, and that this is unlikely to change any time soon.
- A significant part of the refugees have been living in Turkey for more than a decade. Immediate prospects of returning to Syria is very unlikely. In this context, the mission highlighted the remaining long-standing challenges for further integrating the refugees in the local societies.
- The accession process and the perspective of EU-membership remains a major point for Turkish authorities.

### On the Facility :

- The Facility is an innovative pooling tool that is different from other pooling mechanisms used in the EU, such as the EU Trust Funds, mainly in that it **remains embedded within the EU Budget**;
- The Facility is implemented through projects (more than 100 ongoing projects), and only a small share of the budget is allocated directly to some Turkish government ministries. As a result, projects benefit directly to refugees in main priority areas (Education, Protection, Health and Socio-economic support, ...); funds absorption has rapidly reached a cruising speed;

- With the second tranche of the Facility, a shift from humanitarian support to development assistance could be implemented, according to the needs on the ground;
- The promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights for women and girls, gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment are clearly reflected in the Facility's choice of interventions;
- Overall, the Facility, combined with efforts of Turkish authorities and civil society have proven effective;
- The ongoing financial and economic crisis in Turkey<sup>1</sup> is increasing the pressure both on the refugee communities and on the local population. Despite the increase of the minimum wage, the impact of the crisis on low and middle income is tremendous; refugees are at the front line with only 2% of them working in registered employment. For this reason, the EU calls for more long-term labour strategy for the refugees in Turkey;

**Mission debriefing:** The mission debriefing took place in the BUDG meeting of 11 July 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> The Turkish Lira lost approximately 40% of its value in 2021 alone, and Turkey's annual inflation reached 70% in April 2022

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkish-inflation-jump-near-70-april-2022-04-28/>

## II. Meetings and visits summaries

### 1. Visit of the Journalist Association/Press House

#### *Beneficiaries and journalists*

- Underlined the solidarity and protection provided to journalists by the association, through platforms and safe environments where they can continue their work in a difficult environment and develop their capacities;
- Confirmed the major impact of the association in the field of advocacy and lobbying activities at national and international levels, underlined that financial support is also a key feature to help journalists and alternative media across the country;
- Highlighted that the training programme for young journalists, focusing on ethics, pluralistic media and freedom of press is crucial for future generations.



#### *Members*

- Confirmed their commitment to contribute to pluralistic media and free press in Turkey, generally as a safeguard of democracy, and particularly on budgetary questions, to ensure effective investigations on the right use of funds and tackling corruption;
- Praised the success and importance of this EU-funded project; stressed the importance of continuing to monitor and disseminate the changes instigated by the association through the voice of external experts and civil society.

## 2. Visiting a public pre-school in disadvantaged Mamak district

Members visited a pilot public pre-school of the project in a disadvantaged district of Ankara, and observed a guided play & learning session using LEGO<sup>2</sup>.

Beneficiary: Ministry of National Education

Implementing partner: UNICEF

*During the project visit,*

- The school headmaster explained that early childhood education and care services are relatively limited in Turkey, and even more so for vulnerable children; he related that the project contributes to the development of new models of education, improving the quality of early childhood education;
- The Unicef representative explained that the project's budget of EUR 30 million is used not only for the construction of hundreds of classrooms and playgrounds, but also for training more than 75 000 teachers and school principals about new programme and methods; some 10 000 of the trained teachers will in turn train other school staff; a revision of the national pre-primary education programme is also being assessed;
- The Ministry of Education district's representative underlined that Turkey- EU relations are important; study visits are organised for children to better understand each other.

*Members*

- Noted the importance of a qualitative early childhood education for all children, even more so for refugee children to support their integration;
- Valued the positive impact of the project not only on children, but also on their families and especially mothers who could get into employment while children are at school;
- Were impressed by all the pedagogical tools put in place at school and by awareness-raising campaigns outside school.



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<sup>2</sup> LEGO Foundation is a partner in one of the project activities.

### **3. Meeting with the Ministry of Family and Social Services to brief on an IMBC project, implemented by UN Women, on gender-responsive planning and budgeting**

#### *Summary of the presentations*

- The Deputy Minister, Ms. Fatma Öncü, explained that gender equality is targeted through legislation and policy mainstreaming; IPA funds have been very useful to implement projects<sup>3</sup>, and she regrets that the level of funding is decreasing in the next programming;
- Other representatives of the Ministry of Family and Social Services detailed the three objectives under gender-responsive planning and budgeting - to increase national and local authorities' awareness and understanding GRB - to increase their capacity to develop gender-responsive policies, plans and programmes - and finally to enhance gender advocates and women's groups capacity for effective monitoring and accountability;
- The Country Director of UN Women Turkey, Ms Asya Varbanova, underlined the 10-year long collaboration between UN Women and the Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Services; she mentioned that the integration of gender budgeting by Turkish authorities in their new performance budgeting framework is expected to lead to major results.

#### *Members*

- Deplored Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul convention, as gender violence is still a reality;
- Were impressed by the direction taken to a systematic and sustainable integration of gender perspective at all stages of national and local policy making and budgeting processes.



<sup>3</sup> Ongoing projects involve preventing discrimination against women, ensuring equal rights and opportunities, offering shelters, improving education, labour integration, etc...

#### **4. Meeting with Mr. Bulent Özcan Director General for Financial Cooperation and Ms. Elif Kurşunlu, Head of Department of Accession Policy (Directorate for EU Affairs)**

##### *Turkish representatives*

- Declared that, despite turbulent times, over 20 years of collaboration have established well-functioning mechanisms between the EU and Turkey; it is key to stay open and revitalise the accession process;
- Highlighted that Turkey has shown a strong commitment to cooperate with the EU by setting up dedicated teams in eight Turkish Ministries to manage the EU projects; explained that Turkey is participating in EU Programmes such as Horizon Europe and Erasmus +, insisted on Turkey's strong experience in implementing EU-funded projects; and its willingness to expand participation also to EU4Health and EFSD+;
- Expect to see a continuation and an increase of the EU support for projects linked to the Green Deal and the digital transition, as well as for migration and border management.



##### *Members*

- Mentioned their awareness of the tremendous efforts delivered by the Turkish government in the current situation;
- Acknowledged the common interest and good partnership between the EU and Turkey;
- As Members of the Committee on Budgets, underlined that the goal of the mission is to observe the implementation of the IPA and FRiT funds so that lessons can be learned for future crisis, namely the Ukraine war; believe that the structure of the Facility and the financing of projects brings many advantages to all parties.

## 5. Meeting at the Grand National Assembly with Chair of the Budget committee – AKP MP Cevdet Yilmaz



### *The Chair of the Grand National Assembly's Budget Committee*

- Underlined common interests shared by EU and Turkey in many domains; expressed strong interest for Turkey to join the EU.
- Deplored that the decreasing funding from EU under indirect management makes Turkey's situation barely sustainable in light of current issues such as the migratory pressure;
- Reminded that IPA and FRiT funds should not be considered as if they could compensate each other, since they have different objectives.

### *Members*

- Recognised the success of the EU projects implemented in Turkey but pointed out to the existing fundamental rights and democratic challenges in Turkey;
- Underlined that there is budgetary pressure almost everywhere, and namely in the EU Budget, where many priorities cannot be tackled as they should;
- Mentioned that, despite the budgetary constraints, EU support to Turkey through IPA and FRiT are still significant.

## 6. Visit of a Tekstilkent Extended Migrant Health Center

Members had the opportunity to visit one of Gaziantep's extended migrant health centre, which has the particularity not only to attend to Syrian patients but also to employ Syrian refugees with medical background.

### *During the Health Centre visit*

- Medical staff of the centre showed Members around the various services (including general practitioners, specialists, laboratories, x-ray, social services and psychologists); staff explained that the workload in the centre is high but salaries are lower than in Turkish hospitals. Still, their work is satisfying as it is providing very good results in improving the health status of refugees;
- The health centre Director explained that quality primary health care services are delivered free of charge to anyone registered in the Turkish health system; vaccination is provided for babies without the need for any official document; he added that outreach activities are starting outside the health centre;
- Patients confirmed that the access to the centre and appointment taking is easy, five interpreters support to facilitate good communication.

### *Members*

- Expressed their appreciation for the high number of patients attended on a daily basis with quality health services;
- Were informed that the Covid crisis lead to some difficulties, for instance in communicating with patients, but that the Turkish government had swiftly provided for all the necessary material;
- Valued the increased health literacy and improved health-seeking behaviours of refugees, especially amongst young women and young mothers.



## 7. Visit of a project on employment/entrepreneurship - Meeting with ICMPD ENHANCER Project Pilot Common Use Facility Grant Scheme Beneficiaries

Members met several beneficiaries of the 'Enhancer' project pilot. The aim of the project is to contribute to the mutual harmonization between refugees and the Local Host Communities (LHCs) through improving entrepreneurship opportunities.

Beneficiaries of a grant attributed to a prototyping centre explained that they benefited from training by mentors, support for their business plans preparations and of the prototyping of new products. Some projects resulted in the commercialisation of the new product, benefiting Turkish and Syrians entrepreneurs, as well as the SMEs with an increased income.

Several other entrepreneurship projects were presented to Members by the following grant beneficiaries, together with the refugees and the Turkish entrepreneurs:

*Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce-Food & Gastronomy Entrepreneurship Hub*

*Gaziantep University Techno Park*

*Gaziantep Industrial Design and Hybrid Modelling Centre Inc. (GETHAM)*

*Sanliurfa Municipalities*

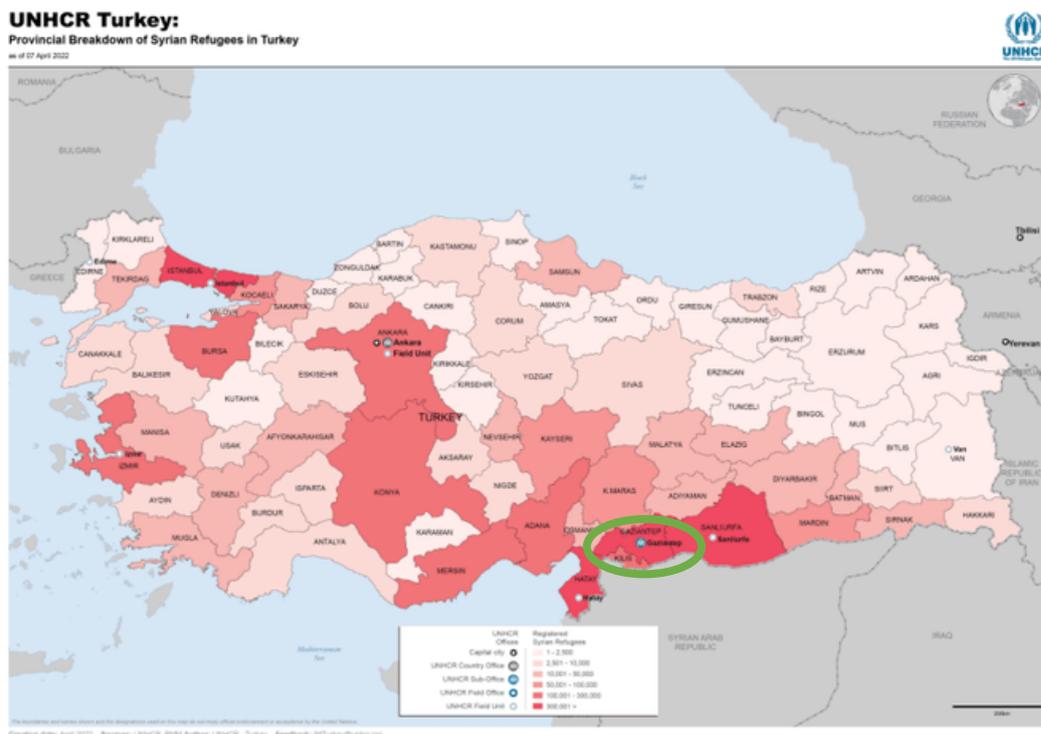
Members could discover final products such as clothes and food, and hear about new innovative technologies, all in the scope of Common Use Facilities.

### *Members*

- Were impressed by the willingness and motivation of the refugees and the good collaboration with LHCs and beneficiaries; especially as some refugees had to start their studies again in Turkey to be able to benefit from the scheme;
- Underlined the high quality opportunities offered to some Syrian entrepreneurs through the programme;
- Noted that contribution to the policy-making, implementation and its coordination at the central and local level are targeted under this programme, and that even better labour opportunities could be offered to refugees if a long-term labour policy would be developed for them.



## 8. Working lunch with Mayor of Gaziantep Fatma Sahin



Gaziantep, in southern Turkey, is one of the cities most affected by the influx of migration to Turkey and home to about half a million Syrian refugees.

*Ms Fatma Sahin, the Mayor of Gaziantep*

- explained that the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality (GMM) established Turkey's first Migration Management Directorate to lead the refugee response programme of the city.
- The GMM's migration policy has a humanitarian approach based on social justice and human rights.
- The GMM focuses on a conflict-sensitive approach to mitigate tension.
- The GMM's policies are based on ensuring the common welfare of refugees and host communities.

*Members*

- Were impressed by Gaziantep's population increase of 30% due to newcomers fleeing the crisis across the border in Syria
- Praised the success of the city's model of tolerance and integration

## 9. Support to semi-nomadic refugees in GOAL's Social Support Center

Members met representatives of the GOAL's Social Support Center, beneficiaries of an ECHO protection project.

The target group of this project are nomadic and semi-nomadic refugees, generally engaged in seasonal agricultural labour, and their family members. These communities are marginalised and very vulnerable. Their main difficulties are the lack of an address leading to the refusal of financial and social support, out of school children and child labour, discrimination of LGBTQ, no access to facilities, such as health care centres, located too far away.

GOAL targets to provide support to 21 000 refugees with cash assistance, prevention support (legal and psychological counselling, translation, ...). The organisation is also working on raising awareness towards local stakeholders on the specificities of such communities.

### *Members*

- Were impressed to see examples of support from the humanitarian aid instrument of the Facility, managed by DG ECHO; appreciated how these actions can respond quickly to needs of vulnerable populations;
- Acknowledged that, while the vast majority of Syrian refugees living outside camps, in cities and towns, the most vulnerable part of them may not be forgotten and humanitarian aid remains a necessity and that integration in local communities is an existing challenge.



*While in Gaziantep, Members had the opportunity to have a working dinner with several implementing partners, where they had the opportunity to bilaterally complement their understanding of the above projects and their impact to the region.*

### III. Mission Programme

#### Monday 23 May 2022

- 15:00** Arrival in Ankara from Brussels – VIP lounge welcome by Second secretary Helene Bourdieu
- 16.00 – 17.00** Briefing by Deputy Head of Delegation Eleftheria Pertzinidou, Acting Head of Cooperation and Head of OPS2 Angel Gutierrez and Deputy Head of OPS1 Esther Bouma  
*Venue: EUD ground floor*
- 17.30 - 18.45** Visit of the Journalist Association/Press House OPS 1  
*Address: Gazeteciler Cemiyeti Basın Evi, Üsküüp Cad. No:35 Çankaya*  
*Contact person: Ms. Seda Erden from EUD Ankara COOP1, +90 533 765 48 62*  
*Kindly note that Seda Erden will accompany the mission to the Press House*
- 19.00- 21.00** Dinner hosted by HoD  
**Venue: EU Residence**  
Format MEP + BUDG secretariat + HoD+ SF+HB  
  
*Transfer to the Sheraton hotel and check in*

#### Tuesday 24 May 2022

- 9.15 – 9.30** Departure from Sheraton Hotel and transfer to Mamak district
- 9.30 - 10.30** Visiting a public pre-school in disadvantaged Mamak district and organizing a guided play activity on the spot (an IPA-II funded project in cooperation with MoNE and UNICEF)  
  
*Address: Manolya Pre-school, Kazım Orbay 341.Sk No:2 06630 Mamak - Ankara*  
*Contact Person: Mehmet Caner Demir from EUD Ankara COOP2, +90 533 4971003*
- 11.00 - 12.30** Meeting with the Ministry of Family and Social Services to brief on an IMBC project, implemented by UN Women, on gender-responsive planning and budgeting - COOP1  
*Venue: Ministry of Family and Social Services*  
  
*Address: Söğütözü Mahallesi 2177. Sokak No: 10/A Kat: 20-21 Çankaya / Ankara,*  
*Contact person: Ms. Nalan Özdemir from EUD Ankara COOP1, +90 530 402 29 67*  
*Kindly note that Ms. Nalan Özdemir and Ms. Beatrice Zanella, both from EUD Ankara COOP1, will accompany the mission*
- 12.30 - 13.30** Lunch (lunch box provided by the Sheraton)
- 14.00 - 15.30** Meeting with Mr. Bulent Özcan Director General for Financial Cooperation and

**Ms. Elif Kurşunlu, Head of Department of Accession Policy (Directorate for EU Affairs)**

*Venue: EU affairs Directorate MFA Mustafa Kemal, 2082. Cd. No:5, 06530*

*Çankaya/Ankara, Turkey*

*Accompanied by: SF, AGH, HB*

**16.00- 17.30 Meeting at the Grand National Assembly with Chair of the Budget committee – AKP MP Cevdet Yilmaz**  
*Accompanied by: SF, HB*

*Departure to the airport*

**19.15 Departure from Ankara airport (TK7126)**  
*Accompanied by EP*

**20.25 Arrival in Gaziantep**

*Transfer to Divan hotel and check in*

*Mücahitler, Sani Konukoğlu Blv. No:92/A, 27090 Şehitkamil/Gaziantep, Turkey*

**Wednesday 25 May 2022**

*Accompanied by Abed Beyazit, Elif Elci and Libor Chlad (OPS3), Elina Papadimouli (Political section) Devrig Velly (ECHO) and Jonhatan Gray (ECHO)*

**9.00 - 11.00 Visit of a Tekstil Kent Extended Migrant Health Center**  
*Tekstil Kent Mahallesi (Ünaldı) Hasip Duru Cad. No:4-6 Şahinbey*

**11.30-12.00 Visit of a project on employment/entrepreneurship  
Hasan Kalyoncu University**  
*Contact Person: Techno Park Manager Mr Cengiz Helvacikara  
e-mail: cengiz.helvacikara@hku.edu.tr Phone : +90 539 503 14 14  
Address: Havaalanı Yolu Üzeri 8. km, 27010 Şahinbey/Gaziantep  
google maps link: <https://goo.gl/maps/a9HNWbjxbvHA3AYV9>*

*Visiting the Kalyon Garage Prototyping centre and presenting the machinery and equipment procured from the ICMPD Grant Rector, Project Coordinator and the Techno Park Manager will present their projects and University.*

*SuTP owned and Turkish owned SMEs as the final beneficiaries of the Grant Project will join the visit to present how they benefited from the ICMPD Grant in terms of Mentoring and training activities and prototyping services of the granted project.*

**12.00-13.15 Meeting with ICMPD ENHANCER Project Pilot Common Use Facility Grant Scheme Beneficiaries.(Project Fair)  
Location (Hasan Kalyoncu University Meeting Hall)**

*Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce-Food & Gastronomy Entrepreneurship Hub*

*Gaziantep University Techno Park  
Gaziantep Industrial Design and Hybrid Modelling Centre Inc. (GETHAM)  
Sanliurfa Metropolitan Municipality  
Sanliurfa Karakopru Municipality  
Sanliurfa Viransehir Municipality  
Sanliurfa Suruc Municipality*

*Each grant beneficiary will present their projects on given booths. During these presentations, final beneficiary (SuTP and Turkish Entrepreneurs) of each Granted Project will accompany Grant Beneficiaries. Some projects will also present the products produced in the scope of Common Use Facilities.*

**13.30-15.00 Lunch with Mayor of Gaziantep Fatma Sahin**  
*Gazi, Zübeyde Hanım Blv. No:39, 27400 Şehitkamil*

**15.30-16:30 Visit of ECHO protection project:**  
FGD with semi-nomadic refugees in GOAL's Social Support Center  
*Unaldi, Hasip Durri Cd. No:7, 27300 Sahinbey/ Gaziantep*

**19.00 Dinner organized by ICMPD**  
**Participants:**  
**ICMPD** (*Pınar Yapanoğlu, Burhan Akyılmaz*)  
**ECHO:** *Jonathan Gray, Devrig Velly*  
**EUD:** *Libor Chlad, Abdulrahman Beyazit, Elina Papadimouli*  
**CARE:** *Sherine Ibrahim, Salah Hamwi*  
**GIZ:** *Damla Goren, Wolfgang Jessen*

*Venue: Bayazhan  
Akyol, Atatürk Blv. No:119 D:1, 27010 Şahinbey*

**Thursday 26 May 2022**

*Return of the Members and staff to the EU*

## IV. List of Participants

**BUDG Mission to Turkey  
Ankara and Gaziantep, Turkey  
23-25 May 2022**

<b>MEPs BUDG</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Country</b>
Niclas HERBST (Head of the delegation)	EPP	Germany
Eider GARDIAZABAL RUBIAL	S&D	Spain
Bogdan RZOŃCA	ECR	Poland

<b>MEP LIBE</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Country</b>
Elena YONCHEVA	S&D	Bulgaria

<b>Secretariat staff</b>		
Natacha POLIDOROFF	Administrator	BUDG Secretariat
Songül DOGAN	Assistant	BUDG Secretariat

<b>Political Group staff</b>	<b>Group</b>
Yoann MOISAN	S&D
Michal CZYKIERDA	ECR

<b>Interpreters</b>	<b>Country</b>
Verda KIVRAK - <i>Team Leader</i>	Turkey
Ebru KANIK	Turkey
Emrah KALE	Turkey
Ozan BEDIR - <i>Technician</i>	Turkey

**Abbreviations of the political groups:**

EPP Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in the European Parliament

S&D Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament

ECR Group of the European Conservatives and Reformists