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[Supporting refugees in Greece: €180 million in emergency support](#)

The European Commission has announced today new funding of €180 million for aid projects in Greece, including to scale up the flagship [‘Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation’ \(ESTIA\)](#) programme which helps get refugees into urban accommodation and out of camps and provides them with regular cash assistance.

The funding comes as Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** met today with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in Athens.

Launched in July 2017 with the UN Refugee Agency, ESTIA is the biggest EU aid operation in the country and works in line with the Greek government’s ‘out of camps’ policy. So far it has created more than 23,000 urban accommodation places and set up a cash assistance scheme serving more than 41,000 refugees and asylum seekers.

“Our humanitarian programmes for refugees in Greece are a clear and loud signal of European solidarity. We continue to deliver on our strong commitment to help refugees in Greece live more secure, normal and dignified lives, and facilitate their integration into the local economy and society. Our ESTIA programme is achieving real results to change people’s lives for the better. I pay special tribute to the Greek citizens and mayors who have welcomed refugees in their municipalities with great empathy and care,” said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**.

Six other contracts have been signed with the Danish Refugee Council, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund, Médecins du Monde, the Spanish Red Cross, as well as Greek NGOs METAdrasi and Smile of the Child to address pressing humanitarian needs in Greece, including shelter, primary health care, psycho-social support, improved hygiene conditions, non-formal education, the provision of interpretation for health and protection.

Overall, the European Commission has made available over €1.5 billion of support for Greece to help manage the humanitarian situation, migration and the external borders, through various kinds of funding.

Background

EU emergency support in Greece

In urgent and exceptional circumstances such as the increased influx of refugees in Europe, the European Commission can fund humanitarian aid for people in need within the EU territory through the Emergency Support Instrument, activated for the first time in March 2016. Overall EU humanitarian assistance disbursed so far to Greece through this instrument amounts to €605.3 million.

ESTIA programme with the UNHCR

Today's new funding for ESTIA will allow the programme to set up 27, 000 places in urban settings by the end of 2018. The bulk of the rented apartments will be in cities and towns on the Greek mainland while up to 2,000 places will be located on the Greek islands. Several municipalities in Greece are also part of this scheme.

The ESTIA cash assistance scheme aims to reach 45,000 people by mid-2018. Refugees and asylum seekers receive pre-defined monthly cash allocations through a dedicated card. This provides choice and enables them to meet their basic needs with dignity, while supporting the local economy. Making cash assistance more efficient remains a priority for the EU.

The Commission's humanitarian support complements other EU funding instruments which have already been providing significant financial resources for assistance in Greece such as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund, the European Fund for the Most Deprived, and the EU Health Programme. It is also complementary to the voluntary offers for material assistance initially provided by states participating in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

For More Information

[Factsheet 'Greece: Response to the Refugee Crisis'](#)

20 hackers arrested in EUR 1 million bank phishing scam

□Criminals faked e-mails from tax authorities to defraud bank customers across Italy and Romania out of EUR 1 million

29 March 2018

Joint Eurojust/Europol press release

A two-year long cybercrime investigation between the Romanian Directorate for Investigating Organised Crime and terrorism – Central Structure, Romanian National Police, the Prosecution Office of Milan and the Italian National Police, with the support of Eurojust, Europol and its Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce, has led to the arrest of 20 suspects in a series of coordinated raids on 28 March. Nine individuals were detained in Romania and 11 were arrested in Italy for banking fraud that netted EUR 1 million from hundreds of customers of two major banking institutions. The Romanian authorities have conducted 15 house searches involving 120 Romanian police officers, while the Italian authorities carried out 9 home and computer searches, involving more than 100 Italian police officers. Documents, IT devices, drugs and other materials were seized in Romania and Italy.

The organised crime group (OCG), comprised of Romanian and Italian nationals, used spear phishing e-mails impersonating tax authorities to harvest the online banking credentials of their victims.

While the most common phishing scams generate millions of generic e-mails, spear phishing e-mails are personally addressed to targeted stakeholders with content to make them appear to be sent from a reputable source, such as a bank. Recipients are encouraged to click on a link, which will lead to a fake version of a legitimate website from which their account or contact details can be stolen.

The investigation, initiated in 2016, uncovered how the criminals used the stolen online banking credentials to surreptitiously transfer money from the victims' accounts into accounts under their control, and from there withdrew the money from ATMs in Romania with credit/debit cards linked to the criminal accounts.

The highly organised OCG pursued its criminal activity using encrypted chat applications. It established its power by applying intimidating and punitive methods towards affiliates and competitors. The OCG is also suspected of money laundering, drug and human trafficking, prostitution and participation in a criminal organisation.

During the investigation, Europol supported the case by providing tailored intelligence analysis and expertise to the investigators and deploying mobile offices on the action day to both countries. Several coordination and operational meetings took place prior to the action at Eurojust and Europol.

Eurojust ensured close cooperation and coordination among the prosecuting and investigating authorities in both Romania and Italy. During two coordination meetings held at Eurojust in March and October 2017, decisions were taken to facilitate the execution of coordinated actions with simultaneous arrests and searches, prevent a conflict of jurisdiction (ne bis in idem issue), continue the parallel investigations and exchange of information, and organise a coordinated action day. On 28 March, a coordination centre was set up at Eurojust, facilitating the exchange of information between the involved countries and providing a final global overview of the results.

Due to the demanding investigative measures run on an international level, the Romanian and Italian judicial authorities requested the establishment of a joint investigation team (JIT), which was set up in March 2017 between Italy and Romania with the assistance of Eurojust. Eurojust also facilitated the funding process of the JIT. The JIT allowed for efficient cooperation and coordination, including the continued exchange of information and evidence between Italy and Romania.

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