

€3bn, Visa Deal and EU Access Talks if Turkey Stops Refugee Flow to Europe

By [RT](#)

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The EU and Turkey have agreed on an “action plan” that might give Ankara up to €3 billion (\$3.4bn) in aid, visa privileges and new talks on Turkey-EU membership in return for its help in stemming the flow of refugees to Europe.

The EU summit in Brussels stretched into the early hours of Thursday, and seems to have achieved some results. While no final deal has been inked, EU leaders and Ankara have managed to agree an “action plan”, European Council President Donald Tusk told reporters.

“Our intensified meetings with Turkish leaders ... in the last couple of weeks were devoted to one goal: stemming the migratory flows that go via Turkey to the EU. The action plan is a major step in this direction,” said Tusk.

Yet he expressed “cautious optimism,” that the plan would succeed, but has welcomed the agreement of an EU-Turkey joint action plan to tackle the current migratory crisis.

In the summit’s spotlight was the ambitious deal, previously drafted between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

The deal’s terms included three billion euros (\$3.4 billion) in aid, the easing of visa restrictions for EU travel for Turkish nationals, and resurrecting negotiations for EU membership. Turkey also wanted to be included on the list of “safe countries” for asylum.

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In return, Turkey promised to strengthen its border controls, greater co-operation with Greece, being another first destination for refugees fleeing war, instability and poverty in the Middle East.

In exchange for visa-free access for its citizens, Ankara would agree for the previously drafted readmission deal, meaning that Turkey would take back those asylum seekers, who entered the EU from its territory.

"We will not sign the readmission agreement before steps are taken on the Schengen visa and thus a visa liberalization is secured for Turkish citizens," Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said in an interview before the summit. According to Davutoglu, Turkey would like the deal by the first half of 2016.

While Turkey wants EU to show good will addressing the free-visa travel, European leaders want proof that Turkey will live up to its pledges, as part of the deal would see Turkey increase its crack down on people-smugglers.

"We need guarantees that Turkey's response to our offer will be as concrete and as substantive as ours," European Council President Donald Tusk said.

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As for the 3 billion euros in aid for Turkey, the EU leaders agreed that the request was reasonable.

"We are declaring as ready and pulling to have a share the burden with Turkey because Turkey, on the very doorstep of the European Union, has to shoulder responsibility for more than two million refugees and it stands for a number of years already, so in this period of burden sharing, in this period of solidarity between neighbors, it is only right for the European Union to think how it can participate in this," German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said.

To cement the potential deal Merkel is set to visit Istanbul on Sunday.

"There is still a huge amount to do," Merkel said in a press conference. *"But you cannot say that we've achieved nothing."*

The deal to pursue Ankara's help stems from German Chancellor Angela's Merkel calls to *"secure the external borders"* of the Union. Over 710,000 migrants have arrived to the EU's border so far this year.

"We cannot organize or stem the refugee movements without working with Turkey," said Merkel as the leaders of the 28 nation states arrived for the summit in Brussels.

Germany, which has taken on a hefty leading role in offering migrants a new home, is struggling to deliver on its promises. Many that arrive in Germany live on the streets, waiting for the bureaucratic machine to process their paperwork.

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Turkey on the other hand has enormous experience dealing with the influx of refugees that have flooded its borders mainly following the Syrian conflict that began in 2011.

The number of refugees in Turkey in 2015 is expected to rise to 1.9 million people, including 1.7 million Syrian migrants, UN Refugee Agency UNHCR [says](#). With war-torn Syria just across the border, Turkey has set up 22 camps for refugees. Another two camp are under construction now. While the majority of refugees are Syrian, with half being children, others flock to the country from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Somalia.

Turkey has accommodated more than two million Syrian refugees, spending over €7 billion (nearly \$8 billion). So far it has received only €1 billion (\$1.1 billion) in external aid.

“The three billion euros can play a role in the sense that Turkey has already spent more than seven billion on the refugees and has received less than one billion. I think that in the future we have to share the burden, where we were left alone during the last three-four years,” the German Chancellor said.

A large portion of them continue on their outward journey to the EU, risking the rough sea conditions to reach the safety of European borders, where they are often neglected.

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Just as EU leaders were discussing the migrant crisis, an Afghan man trying to make his way from Turkey into Bulgaria near the southeastern Bulgarian town of Sredets was shot and killed.

“A big group of illegal migrants attempted to enter Bulgaria from Turkey. One man suffered a gunshot wound in the incident and died on the way to hospital,” an interior ministry spokeswoman told AFP.

The incident marks the first time that an EU border guard has shot and killed a refugee crossing into the EU. Reacting to the news of the death after the summit, Tusk said that the incident has shown the need for external borders protection.

“For me its the next argument, how important our discussion was tonight. I mean the protection of our external borders is the main priority today,” Tusk said. *“In fact, half of our discussion was today about how we can help in this very demanding process I mean rebuilding of control of our external borders. I think it’s the, this is the next, the next reason to continue this, this work.”*

In addition to the shooting, a Lebanese family of five drowned while crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey to Greece, bringing the toll of those drowned at sea to over

3,000 people.

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