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## **NEW EU AİD SCHEME FOR GREECE TO HELP REFUGEES WITH RENT, CASH**

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Reuters (27 July 2017)

The European Commission will give Greece 209 million euros (\$245 million) in new emergency aid to help refugees stranded in the country rent homes and pay for basics with a cash card, the Commission said on Thursday.

About 62,000 refugees and migrants, mainly Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis headed to northern Europe, have been stranded in Greece since European countries closed their borders in March last year. Most live in overcrowded camps marred by violence.

The scheme, announced with UNHCR, the U.N. refugee agency, will provide 22,000 rented homes in cities and towns on mainland Greece and some 2,000 places on Greek islands.

It will increase the number of refugees living in rented apartments in Greece to as many as 30,000 by the end of 2017, the Commission said.

"Our new funding is a game changer on how we deliver aid to improve people's lives," said Christos Stylianides, the EU's commissioner for humanitarian aid and crisis management.

"The aim of these new projects is to get refugees out of the camps and into everyday accommodation and help them have more secure and normal lives," he said.

Part of the aid will provide refugees with a card with a set monthly cash allocation to help them pay for basic needs such as food, medicine and public transportation.

Thursday's funding more than doubles the EU's emergency support to Greece to a total of 401 million euros.

Nearly 11,000 refugees and migrants have crossed to Greece from Turkey this year, down from 173,000 in 2016 and just a fraction of the nearly 1 million arrivals in 2015.

But a steady flow of about 100 a day continues to weigh on overwhelmed facilities. On the islands, "the situation has become a bit more tense," UNHCR Greece representative Philippe Leclerc said. He called for more transfers to the mainland.

"That's why the accommodation program is important," he said.

Humanitarian groups in Greece, including Save the Children and Medecins Sans Frontieres, are worried that conditions could deteriorate further when the state assumes full management and coordination of services on the islands from August.

"Without a clear transition plan, gaps in services will likely occur and men, women and children may be put at greater risk, without the health, legal and other services and safety they need and have the right to," seven organizations said in a joint statement this month.

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Kaynak/Source: