



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union to
the Republic of Lebanon

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PRESS RELEASE

EU contributes with more than €37m to *Back to School* Campaign

The European Union is supporting the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) *Back to School* 2015/2016 Campaign that was announced today during a press conference held at the premises of the Ministry. The campaign aims to offer free access to education in public schools to 200,000 Lebanese and non-Lebanese children for the school year 2015/2016. Thanks to an EU funding totalling €37.9 million, 46,000 Syrian refugee children will be enrolled in first and second shifts in public schools. They will benefit from learning, educational materials, psychosocial support, trained teachers and child friendly classroom management. Through this support, special focus will also be on access to safe spaces in host communities for Syrian children, to counter the risk of dropout, discrimination and violence.

This EU support is part of a collective effort to bring Lebanese children and Syrian refugee children back to school, which has been defined through a constant dialogue between MEHE, UN agencies, other international donors, civil society and local institutions, and translated through the *Back to School* Campaign. This partnership contributes to developing capacity and to capitalising on the potential role of education in reducing tensions and building stability. It is in line with the Lebanese Government's strategic plan R.A.C.E. (Reaching All Children with Education). Therefore, it will also contribute to mitigating the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon, particularly by alleviating the medium and longer-term needs of refugees from Syria and Lebanese host communities alike.

As the *Back to School* Campaign kicks off, the EU continues its considerable funding in the sphere of education. It supports the Syrian children and the Lebanese authorities who are taking responsibility in helping them, particularly in ensuring free education through public schools. Children and youth represent a dominant group among the refugees living in Lebanon, whose future holds few prospects and the risks of radicalization and illegal migration are big. The EU strongly believes that a pen and a book for Syrian children living in Lebanon can be the antidote for these risks. Child attendance in a public school is the best means to provide a future to a whole country.

Background

Since the start of the conflict in Syria, more than 11.5 million people have been forced to flee their homes, including almost 4 million that fled to neighbouring countries, more than a million of them to Lebanon. So far, the EU has allocated a total of €503.2 million to support Lebanon to face the consequences of the Syrian conflict, disbursed through humanitarian assistance and interventions focusing on assisting Lebanese structures respond to the crisis.

The EU is a leading donor in the response to the Syrian crisis with €3.57 billion mobilised until now by the European Commission and Member States collectively in humanitarian,

development, economic and stabilisation assistance to Syrians in their country and to refugees and their host communities in neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt.

More about the EU response to the Syrian crisis in Lebanon:
http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/documents/related_links/20150914_en.pdf