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FACT SHEET

The EU's work to fight Da'esh and support Syria's people and neighbouring countries

The European Union and its Member States responded to the **sudden expansion of Da'esh** in summer 2014 with **rapid military and humanitarian action**. At the same time, they launched preparations for a **longer-term policy** aimed at:

- Stifling and ultimately destroying Da'esh through **military and counter-terrorist measures**;
- Tackling the **threat of foreign terrorist fighters** flowing to Syria and Iraq and back to the EU;
- Addressing the **political, economic and social root causes of instability** in Syria and Iraq that allowed the terrorist group to develop and thrive.

This work resulted in the 'EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq, as well as the Da'esh threat' adopted by the EU in March 2015.

EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/ Da'esh threat

The strategy has a multi-annual horizon and an initial financial package of EUR 1 billion for 2015-16 was foreseen to support the strategy. This has grown to some **EUR 1.7 billion**, committed since March 2015 for actions supporting the EU regional strategy.

At the Foreign Affairs Council of 23 May, the EU reviewed the implementation of the strategy: its objectives remain valid and should continue to be pursued. The Council also acknowledged that circumstances have changed since the introduction of the strategy and outlined ways in which the implementation of the strategy should adapt to respond these changes.

[Council conclusions on the EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat](#)

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The EU regional strategy foresees **measures that target Syria, Iraq, as well as their neighbours affected by the crisis**. It **combines quick impact actions with longer-term measures** ensuring a comprehensive response.

- The quick response measures include **EU Member States military contributions to the Global Coalition against Da'esh**, measures to **stem the flow of fighters** and resources to Da'esh-held territory as well as EU humanitarian aid to **protect those escaping from Da'esh' brutality**.
- Longer-term means include EU measures to **resolve underlying political crises, foster stability**, especially in areas liberated from Da'esh, and **provide livelihoods and development support to refugees and displaced persons**, including access to jobs, security and education.

On the long-term measures, the **London Conference (February 2016)** has brought additional contributions in order to **address the risk of spill over of the Syrian crisis** in the region and provide **support to neighbouring countries** dealing with inflows of refugees. At the London Conference, the EU and its Member States made nearly two thirds of the 2016 pledges, including a further **EUR 2.39 billion** from the EU budget to assist the Syrian people for the period 2016-17. These new pledges will be reflected in renewed commitments for the implementation of the EU Regional Strategy in 2016-2017.

Previously, the European Commission had in 2014 established the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the "**Madad Fund**", which has now reached a funding of EUR 730 million in contributions from the EU budget, from 21 Member States and from Turkey. The trust fund will notably finance actions **in support to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq** with a focus on increased access of refugees to **education, training, livelihoods and healthcare**. In addition, the **facility for refugees in Turkey** provides a mechanism to coordinate contributions from member states and the EU budget amounting to EUR 3 billion.

Syria

For the Syria crisis, major efforts have been done to address the **humanitarian crisis**. Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, the EU and its Member States have **mobilised EUR 6.4 billion** to address its **causes and consequences** at a regional level. From the commitments made for the implementation of the EU Strategy since its adoption in March 2015, the EU has allocated **EUR 1.5 billion in humanitarian and resilience support to Syrian refugees and IDPs**.

Since 2015, increased focus has been put on reaching people trapped in besieged and hard to reach areas across Syria.

Apart from funding, another major pillar of the EU support has been **advocacy for the protection of vulnerable people** affected by the conflict, complemented by increased humanitarian diplomacy.

The EU is active in the International Syria Support Group and **its two Task Forces on cessation of hostilities and in particular in the one on humanitarian issues**. In this framework, the EU has helped facilitating access to 255 000 people in besieged and 473 000 in hard-to-reach areas since the beginning of the year.

The EU also supports the **resilience of host communities** in neighbouring countries through measures addressing sectors such as education, jobs provision, health, food protection and sanitation. The EU will continue working in this area, as it was confirmed in the London conference in February. "EU compacts", plans that will not only ease the living conditions of refugees but also support the economic and social resilience of the hosting countries, are currently being negotiated with Lebanon and Jordan.

Only for education of Syrian children, since 2011 over EUR 500 million have been mobilised from the EU budget, out of which EUR 53 million for projects inside Syria, reaching more than 2.3 million Syrian children. The large support provided to Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey has helped prevent spilling over of the Syrian crises to the entire region.

Furthermore the EU has increased the **cooperation on counter radicalisation and counterterrorism** with Syria's neighbours in order to prevent the expansion of Da'esh networks outside Syria and Iraq.

The longer term focus has been on **support for the UNSE-led political dialogue** between Syrian parties for achieving an agreement on transitional governance, constitutional reform and transitional justice.

The EU also invested considerable efforts for **the capacity building of the Syrian moderate opposition, civil society and women associations** with the aim of preparing various Syrian actors for the "day after" and for their participation in the political, economic and social reconstruction of their country, including at the local level.

The EU welcomed the outcome of the **International Syria Support Group (ISSG)** ministerial meeting of 17 May and committed to further support for ISSG efforts to strengthen the implementation of the **cessation of hostilities** in Syria, secure country-wide **humanitarian access** and make progress on the issue of **detainees**. These measures are essential for creating an enabling environment on the ground that can allow **credible resumption of the intra-Syrian talks**, which must now focus on negotiation of the modalities for the **political transition**. The EU will continue to support in all possible ways the work of the **UN Special Envoy de Mistura**. The EU will also continue to coordinate the work of the humanitarian donor community in close cooperation with the UN.

Iraq

In Iraq, the EU and the Members States through the Global Coalition have successfully helped to reduce Da'esh's territory by 40% and stem its manpower and resources, thus denying it any prospect of recovery there.

The EU has also been at the forefront of the **humanitarian response**, both actively advocating for the protection of civilians and providing life-saving assistance to Iraqi internally displaced populations and Syrian refugees in the country.

At the same time the EU has been **investing in political, economic and human rights dialogues** with the Iraqi government, not least under the **EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement**. The objective is to promote the government's domestic reform agenda, reconciliation, respect for human rights and fair economic and social development. The EU has also been a key player in **helping the Iraqis consolidate areas liberated from Da'esh through stabilisation measures** aimed at securing areas, establishing rule of law and basic services.

Countering the threat of Da'esh

The EU is addressing the specific terrorist threat of Da'esh through, inter alia:

- Targeted and upgraded **security and counter-terrorism dialogues**
- The adoption of **assistance packages**
- An active participation **in the Global Coalition to counter Da'esh**. EU support to the Global Coalition goes through participation in the working groups on foreign terrorist fighters, on stabilisation, on strategic communications and on counter terrorist financing, as well as in the working groups of the Global Counter Terrorism Forum.

This complements the measures the EU has adopted internally, such as the Passenger Name Record (PNR) directive, the directive on preventing money laundering and terrorism financing, the Action Plan to reinforce preventive measures tackling terrorist financing, the implementing regulation on firearms deactivation, the ongoing work on border management, counter-radicalisation, information exchange, interoperability of databases, monitoring and analytical capacities, rehabilitation, training of professionals, education and youth outreach, all of which contribute to the fight against Da'esh.

Main lines of action in the EU's Strategy

Main lines of action to fight Da'esh that are **common to Syria, Iraq and the close region**:

- Isolate and defeat Da'esh as military force and as a terrorist organisation, and counter its ideological influence outside the EU's border
- Humanitarian aid covering basic needs in Syria and Iraq
- Strengthen the local resilience capacities of refugees and internally displaced persons and their host communities in Syria and Iraq, in neighbouring countries and in the most affected European countries

Main lines of action that are **specific to the political situation in Syria**:

- Work towards a political transition
- Strengthen the moderate opposition, civil society actors and local governance

- Provide basic services and contribute to rebuilding an administration in areas of reduced violence
- Promote human rights/international humanitarian law and ensure accountability

Main lines of action that are **specific to the political situation in Iraq**:

- Support stabilisation and strengthen local resilience capacities
- Support national reconciliation, peace building and transitional justice, including human rights
- Support the Iraqi government in making political inclusiveness a reality