



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

### FACT SHEET

## The EU and the crisis in Syria

Brussels, 16 April 2018

### EU response to the Syrian crisis

The war in Syria, one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has faced since World War II, continues to have devastating and tragic consequences for its people. It is also having an increasingly destabilising impact on the wider region, through the displacement of people, the exacerbation of political and sectarian differences and the spread of terrorism.

There can be no military solution to the conflict. Only a political solution, as defined in the UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, will ensure lasting stability in Syria, and the elimination of Da'esh and other UN-listed terrorist entities in the country.

Therefore, the EU's strategic objectives in Syria are focused on six key areas:

- (a) An end to the war through a genuine political transition, in line with UNSCR 2254, negotiated by the parties to the conflict under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy for Syria and with the support of key international and regional actors,
- (b) Promote a meaningful and inclusive transition in Syria, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, through support for the strengthening of the political opposition,
- (c) Save lives by addressing the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Syrians across the country in a timely, effective, efficient and principled manner.
- (d) Promote democracy, human rights and freedom of speech by strengthening Syrian civil society organisations,
- (e) Promote accountability for war crimes with a view to facilitating a national reconciliation process and transitional justice,
- (f) Support the resilience of the Syrian population and Syrian society.

These objectives were endorsed by the [Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions](#) of 3 April 2017 that, together with the [Joint Communication by the High Representative and the Commission of 14 March 2017](#), form the [EU Strategy for Syria](#), a country specific part of the [EU regional strategy for Syria, Iraq and the Da'esh threat](#) adopted in March 2015 and [reviewed in May 2016](#).

Implementing this Regional Strategy, the EU has also stepped up its engagement, including by supporting, by non-military means, the efforts of the Global Coalition to counter Da'esh. The [EU actions to counter Da'esh](#) illustrate that the EU is fully committed to fighting terrorism, both inside and outside the European territory. The [Syria and Iraq: Counter Terrorism/Foreign Fighters Strategy](#) was endorsed at the EU Foreign Affairs

Council meeting of 20 October 2014 and the EU established an [autonomous sanctions regime to target i.a. ISIL/Da'esh in September 2016](#).

In response to the crisis, the EU hosted in 2017 the [first Brussels Conference "Supporting the future of Syria and the region"](#) and will host a [second Conference on 24-25 April 2018](#), co-chaired with the UN. The Conference will gather more than 85 delegations from the international community at ministerial level, including the regional players, around three objectives: I. reaffirm EU and international support to a political solution to the Syria conflict, consolidating global support for efforts to broker a political solution within the UN-led intra-Syrian talks in Geneva, II. Enhance support and improve conditions to allow for a principled international response to the humanitarian needs generated by the conflict, III. Maintain international engagement in delivering assistance to the people of Syria, both inside Syria and in the neighbouring countries

The EU has called for an end to the unacceptable violence in Syria, which continues to cause the suffering of millions of Syrians and immeasurable destruction of infrastructure. Attacks on cultural heritage are also an unfortunate consequence of the conflict. The EU continues to condemn in the strongest terms the continuing violence and the widespread and systematic violations of [human rights](#). In March 2017, the EU delivered [statements](#) at the Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic during the Human Rights Council session. [On 12 July 2017](#), the EU decided to provide €1.5 million to support the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in Syria.

The European Union has responded decisively to the violent repression of anti-government protests in Syria which began in March 2011, by [suspending its cooperation with the Syrian Government](#) and gradually extending [restrictive measures](#). These measures have been targeted and include humanitarian exemptions. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional sanctions targeting the regime and its supporters, as long as the repression continues. On 29 May 2017, the Council extended EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime **until 1 June 2018**. The sanctions currently in place include notably an oil embargo, restrictions on certain investments, a freeze of the assets of the Syrian central bank within the EU, export restrictions on equipment and technology that might be used for internal repression, as well as on equipment and technology for monitoring or interception of internet or telephone communications. It now includes **261 persons** and **67 entities** targeted by a travel ban and an asset freeze over the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria. See the annex for an overview of sanctions in place.

The EU has been at the forefront of the work done to put Syrian chemical weapons under international control, to eventually lead to their destruction. In March 2016, the EU provided funding of €4.6 million to the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) special missions in the Syrian Arab Republic, including activities related to the OPCW Fact Finding Mission and the Joint Investigative Mechanism (UNSCR 2235). The [fourth JIM report](#) was published in October 2016. The EU delivered a [statement](#) in the OPCW on 7 March 2017. On [17 July 2017](#) and on [19 March 2018](#), the Council added **16 and 4 persons respectively** to the list of those targeted by EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime for their role in the development and use of **chemical weapons against the civilian population**.

The [EU Delegation to Syria](#) expatriate staff continues to operate from Beirut, carrying out regular missions to Damascus.

## EU as the leading donor

The Syrian crisis is the world's worst humanitarian disaster. The EU is the leading donor in the international response to the crisis, with over **€10.6 billion** from the EU and Member States collectively allocated in humanitarian and development assistance since the start of the conflict.

Since 2011, the European Commission's support in response to the Syrian crisis has exceeded **€5 billion**, including both urgent life-saving *humanitarian* assistance, and *non-humanitarian* aid, which responds to immediate and medium-term needs. The Commission has allocated almost €1.1 billion in assistance to civilians inside Syria (almost 70% is humanitarian, channelled through EU humanitarian aid- €753 million, and non-humanitarian: ENI – €268.6 million, IcSP – €73.8 million, EIDHR – €16.1 million, DCI-Food – €15.9 million).

At the London Conference on "Supporting Syria and the region" (February 2016), the EU pledged €2.39 billion for Syria and the region for 2016 and 2017. This commitment was confirmed at the first [Brussels Conference "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region"](#) held on 4-5 April 2017, during which the EU restated its London pledge for 2017 and pledged an additional amount of €560 million for 2018 for Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, with the ambition to maintain this sustained level in 2019. At the first Brussels Conference, the international community confirmed €5.6 billion/USD 6.0 billion in funding to support humanitarian, resilience and development activities in 2017 for the Syria crisis response, and €3.5 billion for the period 2018-2020. The first financial tracking report of pledges from Brussels I [published](#) in October 2017 showed that as of that date donors had already contributed 88% of the pledges made to Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. The EU will continue its support to the Syrian population and to the region including by hosting its second Brussels Syria Conference on 24 and 25 April 2018. A second financial tracking report will be published ahead of the Brussels II conference.

## Humanitarian assistance

Since 2011, the Commission has responded to the dire humanitarian situation by ensuring principled assistance and protection for those populations in need. The EU supports humanitarian programmes implemented by its partners (United Nations, International Organisations and International NGOs) in respect of the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, irrespective of political, religious or ethnic affiliations of beneficiaries and only responding to humanitarian needs. Through its first-line emergency response, the EU and its humanitarian partners respond to primary needs of the most vulnerable.

The EU has provided nearly **€1.65 billion** in *humanitarian assistance* for life-saving emergency response, including food, water, emergency medical treatment, sanitation, hygiene, protection, education in emergency and shelter to millions of Syrians and Palestinian refugees inside Syria and to vulnerable Syrian refugees and host communities in neighbouring countries.

Through our humanitarian aid inside Syria, we are reaching millions of people across the country, providing first-line emergency response and post-emergency response in the following key sectors: food; health; shelter and emergency house items; water; sanitation and hygiene; protection and education in emergency. The EU also supports humanitarian partners to preposition stock and contingency planning to anticipate new population movements.

In neighbouring countries hosting refugees (Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon), the EU also provides substantial support to more than **2.5 million vulnerable refugees and host communities** in accessing **shelter, cash assistance, life-saving health and medical assistance** as well as **psycho-social support and protection in 2017 alone**.

The humanitarian and protection situation remains extremely difficult for civilians in many parts of the country, including where fighting is still ongoing, such as in Eastern Ghouta in the outskirts of Damascus, in Idlib governorate, in Afrin and in Northern Syria, with persisting food, health and protection needs as well as lack of access to basic services and life-saving commodities.

While humanitarian convoys have recently finally gained access to some of the hard to reach areas in South and Central Syria, access to the estimated 2.9 million people in hard-to-reach areas, including 400,000 in besieged areas until the recent escalation of violence in Eastern Ghouta, remains a significant challenge and a violation of the latest UNSC Resolution 2401 in particular.

The EU has been continuously calling for the respect of an effective ceasefire, of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and of human rights law, the protection of civilians, especially children, women and other vulnerable groups. The indiscriminate and targeted bombing of civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals and humanitarian facilities must end. The EU also calls for the protection of relief aid workers and for unhindered, unconditioned and sustained humanitarian access to all those in need.

### **Non-humanitarian assistance**

The Commission has mobilised over €3.4 billion in *non-humanitarian aid*, including:

- €758 million through the [European Neighbourhood Instrument \(ENI\)](#) to address the medium term needs of civilians inside Syria as well as of refugees and hosting communities in the region (education, livelihoods, local governance, health, access to basic services);
- €380 million through Macro-financial Assistance (MFA) to Jordan to assist with the influx of Syrian refugees;
- €249 million through the [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace \(IcSP\)](#) for international mediation efforts, accountability and transitional justice preparation, assistance programmes in opposition-controlled areas in Syria, and measures to reduce tensions between refugees and host communities in the region, as well as to support the destruction of Syrian chemical stockpiles and chemical threat prevention;
- €642 million through the [Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance \(IPA\)](#) to Turkey;
- €28 million through the [European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights](#);
- €62 million through the [Development Co-operation Instrument \(DCI\)](#)
- €1428 million channelled through the [EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis](#) (including from the above mentioned instruments ENI, IPA and DCI)

Since its establishment in December 2014, most non-humanitarian aid for Syria's neighbouring countries is channelled through the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis. The EUTF aims to bring a more coherent and integrated EU response to the crisis by merging various EU financial instruments and contributions from Member States into one single flexible mechanism for quick disbursement. The EUTF primarily addresses longer term resilience needs of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries such

as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, as well as the hosting communities and their administrations.

With contributions and pledges from 22 EU Member States and Turkey, amounting to €150 million, and contributions from various EU instruments, the Fund has reached a total volume of almost €1.5 billion to date. Projects focusing on education, livelihoods, health, socio-economic support, water and waste infrastructure have already been approved, covering a total of €1.213 billion. Of this, €920 million have been contracted in over 46 projects to the Trust Fund's implementing partners on the ground, now reaching more than 2 million beneficiaries.

The first 21 projects of the Fund are already showing results:

- 453,552 refugee and host community children and youth obtain improved access to quality education, protection, and psycho-social support.
- 253 schools and education facilities are constructed and renovated.
- 28,520 refugee and host community youth are gaining access to higher and further education and vocational training, among which 4,437 full scholarships and 6,126 language trainings.
- Access to quality emergency health, maternal and child care for Syrian refugees and host communities is improved:  
209,000 vulnerable beneficiaries receive medical care and essential medicines.
- 462,491 refugees and members of host communities improve their economic self-reliance and livelihoods through different vocational, employability and skills trainings, SME support and access to the job market.

Since the on-set of the Syrian crisis, substantial non-humanitarian assistance to the Syrian population **inside Syria** has also been provided by the Commission through the [European Neighbourhood Instrument](#), targeting in particular education, livelihoods, health and civil society support.

Thanks to this financial support, [over 85,000 children](#) have received formal and informal (basic and primary) education in a safe and accessible learning environment since 2016. [Nearly 320,000 pre-primary and primary school children](#) benefited from a school funding programme and received Fortified School Snacks with the essential nutrition and energy to remain concentrated at school; [almost 11,300 households](#) received seeds, fertilizers, tools and cash assistance for farming activities in 2016 and 2017; and [almost 200,000 people \(among whom nearly 110,000 women\)](#) benefitted from the rehabilitation of infrastructure and service facilities in North West Syria in 2016 and 2017.

Under the [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace \(IcSP\)](#) the EU has also focused on a range of issues – support international and local mediation initiatives, foster civil society's role in post-conflict planning, promote women's rights, strengthen inclusive local governance, while deploying non-humanitarian assistance in response to specific crisis in opposition held areas.

As part of the IcSP contribution, the EU has set up in 2016 a Syria Peace Process Support Initiative in partnership with Germany focused on support for the implementation of UNSCR 2254 and the UN-led Geneva peace process. The initiative is in phase II of implementation and provides support for the participants to the peace process, the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Syria, the civil society and women networks as well as funding for activities in the framework of peacebuilding and mediation.

In addition, Commission funds from the [European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights](#) have supported the protection of Human Rights Defenders as well as capacity-building of Syrian journalists.

### **Assistance to neighbouring countries**

With Syrians fleeing the conflict to neighbouring countries since the start of the crisis, these countries are now hosting an unprecedented number of refugees. The European Union is strongly supporting Syrian refugees and their host communities in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq.

#### ***Jordan***

In **Jordan** there are over 650 000 Syrian registered refugees, half of which are children. EU leaders have met Jordan representatives and visited the country many times throughout the last five years.

At the [2017 Brussels Conference](#), the EU and Member States pledged more than 2/3 of the €5.6 billion committed by the international community for 2017. The Conference co-chairs, on behalf of the international community and Jordan reconfirmed and strengthened their commitments, made at the 2016 London Conference in view of strengthening Jordan's resilience vis à vis the impact of the Syria crisis and of inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the European Commission has allocated more than **€1173 million** in assistance to refugees and vulnerable communities. This includes more than €340 million from the humanitarian budget, €380 million from the Macro Financial Assistance (MFA) Instrument, over €230 million from the ENI/ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, €212 million from the EU Trust Fund for the Syrian crisis and more than €44 million from the [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace \(IcSP\)](#). The Commission's humanitarian aid has contributed helping Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan accessing health, food and basic needs assistance, winterisation support, shelter, water and sanitation, psychosocial support and protection. With some 80% of the refugees in Jordan living in urban settings, the Commission supports the most vulnerable refugees and specific programmes to support women and children's needs, since approximately 51% of these refugees are children. The EU remains particularly concerned at the situation at the border with Syria where about 50 000 people remain stranded with little access to relief aid.

In addition, the EU has made available, mostly through Budget Support, an average of €100 million each year in bilateral assistance (all grants) to Jordan under the European Neighbourhood policy, which brings the **overall amount to over €1.8 billion**.

#### ***Lebanon***

The EU pays tribute to the outstanding efforts Lebanon is making since the outset of the conflict. The country is hosting more than 1 million registered Syrian refugees representing one fourth of the Lebanese population, which is the highest per-capita concentration of refugees worldwide. At the 2016 London Conference, the European Commission's pledge increased support for resilience and sustainability in the country. This commitment was confirmed at the [2017 Brussels Conference](#), during which the EU reiterated the pledge made in London a year earlier and confirmed its willingness to have

similar levels of support for 2018 (€560 million pledged for Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) and maintain the level of engagement in 2019.

To date, the European Commission has allocated almost €1.3 billion in assistance to Lebanon since 2011, both for bilateral assistance (€268 million) and specifically in response to the Syrian crisis (close to €1 billion).

This assistance includes €519 million in humanitarian aid and over €600 million for development support from the European Neighbourhood Instrument (€250), the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (€337 million), and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (€44 million) and the Development Cooperation Instrument (€7.5 million) in order to address longer term resilience needs of affected civilians.

## **Turkey**

In Turkey there are over 3.5 million registered Syrian refugees, making Turkey the largest host of refugees in the world. In November 2015, the EU announced the setting up of the **EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey** – with **€3 billion** to deliver efficient and complementary support to Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey. The EU Facility focuses on humanitarian assistance, education, migration management, health, and socio-economic support. The full operational<sup>1</sup> envelope of EUR 3 billion under the 2016 and 2017 budgets was committed and contracted by the end of last year through 72 projects<sup>2</sup>. More than EUR 1.9 billion had been disbursed at the end of March 2018, with the balance to be disbursed as a function of implementation. The EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 confirms that the EU would mobilise additional funding for the Facility by end-2018, bringing the total budget for the Facility to EUR 6 billion.

### *Examples of work done through the facility:*

The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) is the EU biggest ever humanitarian programme. It provides monthly cash payments directly to refugees through a debit card to help meet their basic needs, and as of February 2018 almost 1.2 million refugees had benefited. The EU has committed EUR 998 million to the programme. The Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) provides direct cash payments to refugee families whose children have at least 80% school attendance. It is the EU biggest ever Education in Emergencies programme, with EUR 84 million of EU investment. It has supported over 260,000 children to date.

Under the non-humanitarian strand of the Facility, the majority of contracts were signed towards the end of 2017, implementation of most projects started only in 2018. However, some projects have already had a significant impact on the ground. For example, under the main education project "Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into Turkish Education System", a EUR 300 million direct grant with the Turkish Ministry of National Education 312,151 children have received Turkish language training by 5,486 Turkish language teachers employed under the project as of October 2017. Meanwhile the main pillar of health assistance is the SIHHAT project, a EUR 300 million direct grant with the

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<sup>1</sup> In line with the Financial Regulation, administrative expenditure and technical assistance, as well as monitoring, evaluation and audit, may be contracted beyond 2017 (some EUR 20 million remained to be committed and EUR 40 million to be contracted at the end of 2017).

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news\\_corner/migration\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_corner/migration_en)

Turkish Ministry of Health to ensure refugees' access to healthcare services. Under the SIHHAT project, 12 Migrant Health Centres have become operational as of 31 December 2017, to improve primary healthcare services.

### ***Iraq***

Closely linked to the Syria crisis is the crisis in Iraq. The Iraq crisis –like Syria - is a UN Level-3 emergency with 11 million people in need of humanitarian aid, in a country of 36 million. This includes 3 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and 247000 refugees from Syria.

The European Commission is stepping up its humanitarian assistance to help the most vulnerable in Iraq. The initial allocation for 2017 of €42.5 million comes on top of over €159 million in humanitarian assistance already made available in 2016 and the delivery of 266 tons of aid offered by countries through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in response to Mosul emergency. In 2018 the EU allocated an additional €40 million euro in support of humanitarian aid. EU aid is covering the essential needs of the most vulnerable in Iraq, including food, health care, water, sanitation and hygiene as well as protection, shelter and education in emergencies.

## **ANNEX - RESTRICTIVE MEASURES ON SYRIA**

The EU restrictive measures on Syria consist of:

- Prohibition on the import of arms and related material from Syria. Export restrictions on certain equipment, goods and technology that might be used for internal repression or for the manufacture or maintenance of such products. The measure includes a prohibition on related financial assistance as well as insurance and reinsurance.
- Obligation for member states to inspect vessels and aircraft if there are reasonable grounds to believe they carry arms, related material or equipment which might be used for internal repression. This applies in member states' seaports, airports and in their territorial sea, in accordance with international law. Items that may not be exported from the EU to Syria must be seized.
- Import ban on crude oil and petroleum products from Syria. The prohibition concerns import, purchase and transport of such products as well as related finance and insurance. The ban also includes a prohibition on related technical and financial assistance. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Ban on investment in the Syrian oil industry. This covers loans and credits, acquisition or extension of participations and the creation of joint ventures. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Ban on investment in companies engaged in the construction of new power plants for electricity production in Syria.

- Prohibition to participate in the construction of new power plants, including related technical or financial assistance.
- Ban on exports to Syria of key equipment and technology for the oil and gas industry. The ban also includes a prohibition on related technical and financial assistance. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Ban on trade in goods belonging to Syria's cultural heritage which have been illegally removed from Syria with the objective of facilitating the safe return of those goods.
- The assets of the Syrian central bank within the EU are frozen and it is prohibited to make funds or economic resources available, but the provision allows for legitimate trade to continue under strict conditions.
- Ban on trade in gold, precious metals and diamonds with Syrian public bodies and the central bank.
- Ban on supplying banknotes and coinage to the Syrian central bank.
- Member states must not give new grants and concessional loans to the Syrian government.
- Asset freeze on 261 individuals and 67 entities responsible for or associated with the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria or supporting or benefiting from the regime. The release of certain frozen funds or economic resources may be authorised exceptionally under certain conditions if they are intended, inter alia, for humanitarian purposes; for evacuations from Syria; or in order to make payments on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for activities related to the OPCW verification mission and the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.
- Travel ban on 261 persons responsible for or associated with the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria or supporting or benefiting from the regime.
- Export ban on equipment, technology or software primarily intended for monitoring or interception of the internet or telephone communications.
- No disbursements and payments in connection with existing loan agreements between Syria and the European Investment Bank, as well as the suspension of technical assistance contracts relating to projects in Syria.
- Prohibition to trade Syrian public or public-guaranteed bonds to or from the government of Syria or its public bodies and Syrian financial institutions. No brokering or issuing services for such bonds are allowed.
- Prohibition for Syrian financial institutions to open new branches or subsidiaries in the EU or to establish new joint ventures or new correspondent banking relationships with EU banks.
- EU banks are prohibited from opening offices or accounts in Syria. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Member states are to restrain short and medium term financial support for trade with Syria, including export credits, guarantees and insurance. No more long-term support.
- No insurance or re-insurance to the Syrian government, public bodies, corporations or agencies (except health and travel insurance or compulsory third party insurance for Syrian persons or entities in the EU).
- Cargo flights operated by Syrian carriers and all flights operated by Syrian Arab Airlines may not have access to EU airports.
- Prohibition to export luxury goods to Syria.
- Prohibition on the export of aviation fuel to Syria.

For more information, see [legislation](#) instituting these restrictive measures and [Frequently Asked Questions on EU restrictive measures](#).