

ANNEXE

ACTION FICHE FOR SYRIA

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title	Support to Secondary Education Reform		
Total cost	Total Amount envisaged for the action: 10 000 000 € EC contribution: 10 000 000 € Beneficiary Contribution: 0		
Aid method / Management mode	Project approach Decentralised management		
DAC-code	11320	Sector	Secondary education

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

Although Syria has made remarkable achievements within the framework of implementing the principles of democratization of education and compulsory education, important challenges still need to be achieved for the development and consolidation of an education system ready to meet the demands of the knowledge economy. At the general secondary education level there are several constraints that should be addressed.

The secondary education system needs to be more relevant to the different paths that can be followed at further levels of education and vocational training and to the changing human resource needs of the Syrian market economy and labour market. An Institutional strategy needs to be designed and put in place to face all the required changes. Management, planning and monitoring capacity at all levels have to be strengthened.

Uneven access to quality secondary education and enrolment ratios need to be increased and co-ordination between public and private secondary education system enhanced.

Quality improvement and integrated quality assurance systems are required, including the upgrading of teaching and learning methods, the rehabilitation and training for teachers and inspectors and the availability and efficient utilisation of IT in schools.

Assessment and examination systems need to be revised and upgraded. Guidance and counselling system needs upgrading to enhance relevance of secondary education to changing labour market and choices for higher education.

2.2. Lessons learnt

During the past years, the **EC in Syria has become the main donor** in the development of human resources, focusing on higher education as well as vocational and education training. The new programme aims to take stock of and benefit from these past experiences, which have shown that there is a weak linkage of the secondary education level with higher levels of education and, therefore, with the Syrian labour market.

In this context, special attention should be paid to the guidance and counselling system in schools, as well as to poor evaluation and examination system, which should be upgraded. Each pupil should be guided towards a future career in accordance with its skills, ambitions, potential and the labour market opportunities.

Besides, the evaluation and examination systems, especially at the end of the secondary school stage, need to be enhanced to allow for more effective assessment. Assessments at secondary level need to reflect the results from upgrading quality of education by means of better pedagogic capacities and teaching methodologies.

2.3. Complementary actions

During the past years, the **EC has become the main donor** in the development of human resources. The **EC in Syria** is currently involved in the following **projects** and initiatives on higher education and vocational and education training:

- Upgrading Higher Education Sector Programme (**UHES, 10 €M**), which provides support to Syria's higher education reform process.
- The graduate school Higher Institute of Business Administration (**HIBA, 14 €M**).
- A project for the Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training (**VET, 21 €M**).
- **TEMPUS, Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Windows Programmes.** focused on the development of higher education systems through cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean higher education institutions. The **7th Framework Programme to support research.**
- Cooperation with the Ministry of Education (MoE) has recently started within the framework of an EC funded programme to support Syrian education in areas affected by a large influx of refugees from Iraq (3 €M), which is being implemented by UNICEF.

Besides EC projects, few other donors are targeting specifically secondary education in Syria.

UNICEF has long-standing and extensive experience in the education sector in Syria. It has an ongoing child protection programme in secondary education level. It is also supporting the Syrian education system where affected by a large influx of Iraqi refugees. Furthermore, it has an ongoing programme targeting the upgrading of the quality of basic education in Syria.

Some international and local NGOs (e.g. Norwegian Council, SHEBAB and World Link) are also supporting the secondary education system.

JICA is supporting education at the pre-primary level. Other Member States are providing scholarships and language training (mainly France, UK and Germany) and support to some higher education institutions.

2.4. Donor coordination

At present, coordination among the donor community is very low and is not fostered or facilitated by the government (esp. the State Planning Commission). Some coordination mechanism has recently started in relation to donor support to the Syrian education system affected by the influx of Iraqi refugee children. The EC Delegation is participating in this coordination, which is led by the MoE and UNICEF and will certainly serve as a good opportunity to continue enhancing donor coordination at other levels in the education sector.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The General Objective is the upgrading of the performance of Human Resources in Syria in line with national requirements. The Specific Objective: Syrian Secondary Education Sector is reformed and upgraded in response to the needs of the Syrian social market economy.

3.2. Expected results

- Governance in the secondary education sector is improved.
- Qualitative secondary education developed and expanded.
- Access and participation in secondary education is improved.
- Administration and management of general secondary schools improved.
- Assessment and examinations system upgraded.
- Guidance and counselling services are upgraded in order to enhance the relevance of secondary education and linkage to labour market and higher education.
- Availability and use of IT and communication technology extended among students and teachers.

Specific activities should include: support for development by MoE of a Sectoral Strategy and capacity building at all levels for secondary education; review and enhancement of the role of private secondary education to better complement and coordinate with the public secondary education; teacher qualification and rehabilitation through the development of training programmes; curricula (including relevance enhancement) and teaching methods improvement to enable the development of critical and analytical skills in students; promotion of the use of IT

and communication technology; revision of the framework for examination, evaluation, standardization and educational supervision for students and teachers; revision of the students' guidance and counselling system; development of school management; initiatives to support the better linkage between secondary education and the Syrian society needs (including labour market needs).

Operating modality:

The project will aim at enhancing the Syrian secondary education system at a sectoral level and most of the activities will target the sector as a whole. Project approach has been chosen for the implementation, since the basic requirements for a Sector Policy Support Programme and budget support are not in place.

Some of the interventions will need to be piloted at school level. For this purpose, pilot institutions will be selected in those geographic areas and governorates where needs are significant.

The problems of the secondary education system require for capacity building to be a strong component of the interventions. The project foresees a Project Management Unit located within the MoE premises, which will include and be led by Syrian MoE staff. A pool of Long Term and Short Term Technical Assistance will be mobilised for the different components of the Project.

3.3. Stakeholders

Main stakeholders include the MoE, Public Schools, and the Ministry of Higher Education. It is the first time that the EC provides assistance to the **Ministry of Education**. However, cooperation has already started with a support to the Syrian basic education in areas affected by a large influx of refugees from Iraq. The **Ministry of Higher Education** is a long-standing partner, having participated in EC cooperation projects in the past and still being a current partner for ongoing programmes.

3.4. Risks and assumptions

Key assumptions underlying the programme intervention can be summarised as follows: (i) High level of interest of GoS in human resources development is maintained; (ii) GoS continues committed to a policy reform in Secondary Education; (iii) main stakeholders will make managerial, human and physical resources available, as well as legal and structural reforms required to ensure a smooth implementation of the Programme.

Key risks underlying the programme intervention can be summarised as follows: (i) current and further reforms in the education sector do not take place or slow down; (ii) there is regional and/or national instability; (iii) lack of inter-ministerial coordination.

3.5. Crosscutting Issues

Part of the focus of this project is to improve governance both at central (MoE) and decentralised level (Directorates and schools in the different governorates). The programme will ensure that recommendations and activities take into account the

gender dimension. The choice of the pilot institutions will take into account the need to target under-developed areas (in accordance with the 10th Five Year Plan Eastern region is a priority). Human Rights impact of the programme will be indirect, as learning is one basic human right.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Implementation method

Decentralised management through the signature of a financing agreement with State Planning Commission

The authorities responsible for the programme will be the European Commission, the State Planning Commission (SPC) as national coordinator and the Ministry of Education (MoE) as Beneficiary. The Project Management Unit (PMU) will work in close collaboration with the MoE and other stakeholders and will be responsible at operational level.

The EC Delegation in Syria will be the Contracting Authority for service contracts, including audit, monitoring and evaluation contracts. MoE will be the contracting authority for supply contracts and implementation costs. The Commission controls ex ante the contracting procedures for procurement contracts >50.000 EUR and for all grant contracts, and ex post for procurement contracts ≤50.000 EUR.

Through the programme estimates, payments are decentralised for operating costs and contracts up to the following ceilings:

Works	Supplies	Services	Grants
< 300.000 EUR	< 150.000 EUR	< 200.000 EUR	• 100.000 EUR

However, for decentralised supply contracts, payments are centralised.

The Authorising Officer ensures that, by using the model of financing agreement for decentralized management, the segregation of duties between the authorising officer and the accounting officer of the decentralized entity will be effective, so the decentralization of the payments can be carried out within the limits specified above.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question. No grants are foreseen in the programme. All programme estimates must respect the procedures and standard documents laid down by the Commission, in force at the time of the adoption of the programme estimates in question.

4.3. Budget and calendar

The formulation mission for this project has not been finalised yet. Therefore, figures included in the following budget are indicative and will be confirmed at a later stage. The operational duration will be 48 months after the signature of the Financing Agreement.

1.	<i>Services</i>	7 000 000 €
2.	<i>Equipment</i>	2 000 000 €
3.	<i>Non-salary running costs</i>	300 000 €
4.	<i>Audit, monitoring and evaluation⁵</i>	350 000 €
5.	<i>Contingencies⁶</i>	350 000 €
	<i>Total</i>	10 000 000 €

4.4. Performance monitoring

Performance indicators are included in annexes. They will be further developed during the formulation mission and will be reviewed during the inception phase. They will be monitored through the Programme internal 6-monthly progress reports and by external monitoring missions.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

The programme will undergo, with the European Commission as Contracting Authority for the contracts, a mid-term review, a final evaluation, ex-post evaluation and a final financial audit. The use of the annual Work Plan budgets will be audited. The EC Delegation will prepare the terms of reference and select the contractors for the financial audits and evaluation missions according to internal procedures. All audit and evaluation reports will be communicated to the beneficiary by the EC Delegation.

In addition to the above mentioned evaluations, the European Commission may send specific missions at any time to assess programme progress.

4.6. Communication and visibility

The programme will be implemented in such a way that the best visibility is given, at all times, to the support of the European Commission for the programme, the achievements of its objectives and results obtained.

To this aim, the European Commission Visibility Guidelines⁷ shall be used as guidelines for the programme. All involved stakeholders will take appropriate action in order to avoid any confusion between the present programme and those supported

⁵ gérés directement par la Commission. Les contrats afférents à l'audit et à l'évaluation peuvent être conclus ultérieurement à la date limite de contractualisation indiquée ci-dessus.

⁶ à mobiliser aux fins de la convention de financement selon les procédures qui y sont prévues.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/visibility/pdf/europeaid_guidelines_en.pdf

by other international donors so as to ensure the best visibility to the co-operation between EU and Syria.