



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 16 December 2013

New EU regional development and protection programme for refugees and host communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq

The EU has announced a Regional Development and Protection Programme for refugees and host communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, as part of its long-term development response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

The new programme intends to address the development and protection challenges associated with the Syrian refugee crisis affecting Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. The programme will provide, through analyses, assessments and studies, a sound understanding that the presence of refugees has on host communities and propose opportunities for development for both refugees and their hosts alike. It will also assess refugees' potential contribution to the national and local economy of host countries. The current lack of such studies represents a significant gap in the framework of both the humanitarian and development assistance being carried out in the region.

European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs said: *"There can be no protection for refugees unless they can be self-reliant. Using development assistance to support refugees in their host countries has the potential to mitigate the negative consequences that their presence may have on local communities and, at the same time, enhance the quality of refugee protection by helping them to become self-sufficient. We are committed to ensuring that refugees are included in our long-term development planning."*

Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy added: *"Countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, who have provided vital support to Syrian people when they most need it, with their open-arms policy, unfortunately now face challenges in the ability of their system to cope with the extra numbers. But what people tend to overlook is the huge potential benefits which the refugees also bring. The new programme will help to ensure that refugees are able to contribute to their host communities, through the skills they bring, and through their ability to contribute economically. This programme will usefully complement our continuing support to the hosting communities in Jordan and Lebanon."*

The main activities supported by the new programme will include market-based support for creating employment opportunities, micro-enterprise finance, skills development training, and vocational training, as well as appropriate social infrastructure development, including education, water and sanitation and improved energy supply.

Finally, the Regional Development and Protection Programme will also aim to strengthen the protection of refugees in the region through promoting improved access to basic rights and appropriate legal assistance. It will also provide training to local and national authorities and civil society groups who are active in the field of asylum and refugees.

The total EU contribution to the programme amounts to €12.3 million (total budget of the programme is €16 million). The remaining budget comes from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and the Netherlands and the UK Home Office. The programme is part of the Annual Action Programme (AAP) of the Thematic Programme for Migration and Asylum.

Background

An estimated 6.8 million people are affected by the on-going violence in Syria and require humanitarian assistance. The UN estimates that more than 4.25 million people have also been displaced within Syria. There are now over 2 million refugees (registered and awaiting-registration) in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt and North Africa. This number is continuing to rise as hostilities grow. The High Commissioner for Refugees office projects a total of 3.45 million refugees from Syria by the end of 2013.

The EU – its Institutions and its Member States - is the biggest donor of assistance in response to the Syrian crisis, both in Syria and in neighbouring countries. In June, the European Commission announced a substantial increase in assistance amounting to €400 million in the context of the Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Towards a comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crisis" dated 24 June 2013.

This assistance package is composed of €250 million for humanitarian assistance and €150 million for development assistance. Out of the €150 million funding for development needs, €40 million will deal with the Syrian crisis in Lebanon, €60 million – in Jordan and €50 million in Syria.

For more information

Website of European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/piebalgs/index_en.htm

Website of European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy,

Štefan Füle: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/fule/

Website of the DG for Development and Cooperation DG-Europe Aid:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm

EU Neighbourhood Info Centre: <http://www.enpi-info.eu>

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