



Brussels, 18.8.2021
C(2021) 6088 final

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION
of 18.8.2021
on an exceptional assistance measure regarding Syria

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012¹, and in particular Article 110 thereof,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) No 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014, (EU) and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009², and in particular Article 23(6) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Since the end of 2020, the self-declared Autonomous Administration in north-east Syria has allowed a significant number of Syrian nationals held in the Al Hol camp to return to their areas of origin in the north-east of the country. However, no mechanism for preparing their release or ensuring an adequate post-release follow-up has been put in place with the risk that individuals become or remain vulnerable to radicalisation and discrimination. Returnees experience difficulties in finding livelihood opportunities and securing children's education. At the same time, further efforts are needed to ensure that primary health care is available for the population in north-east Syria and to ensure that landmines and explosive remnants of war are removed to enable internally displaced people to safely return and rebuild their lives. The present situation makes it necessary to adopt an exceptional assistance measure regarding Syria.
- (2) In order to ensure the implementation of the measure, it is necessary to adopt a financing decision. Article 110 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 establishes detailed rules on financing decisions.
- (3) The planned assistance is to comply with the conditions and procedures set out by the restrictive measures³ adopted pursuant to Article 215 TFEU.

¹ OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1.

² OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1.

³ www.sanctionsmap.eu. Note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy, the OJ prevails.

- (4) The objective of the measure set out in this Decision is to support the reintegration of individuals released from the camps and persons returning to their areas of origin in north-east Syria to avoid radicalisation and discrimination, ensure social cohesion, access to health and protection from risks posed by landmines and unexploded devices, in order to remedy exceptional and unforeseen situations as referred to in Article 4(4) point (a) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/947.
- (5) In accordance with points (h), (j), (l), (m) and (p) of Annex IV, paragraph 1 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/947, the activities set out in this Decision will include the establishment of a women-led and women-owned committee in Deir ez-Zor to coordinate local mediation and reintegration support efforts; social engagement activities aimed at decreasing the level of isolation of persons living in the Al Hol camp; and support to basic health services and mine action (manual and mechanical clearance and mine education) in several locations in north-east Syria.
- (6) The effectiveness of the Union response to the situation referred to in recital 1 depends on the rapid and flexible implementation of an exceptional assistance measure of limited duration in accordance with Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/947.
- (7) The measure provided for in this Decision is complementary to assistance provided under other Union short-term or long-term external assistance instruments. No fully adequate response can be provided under those instruments to the specific needs being addressed. Therefore, an adequate and effective response is required to enable early action in accordance with Article 4(4) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/947.
- (8) The measure provided for in this Decision is consistent with the Union strategic policy framework for Syria. Synergies and complementarities are expected with other Union interventions, as detailed in point 7 of the Annex.
- (9) In order to provide support in the health sector in a flexible way, it is necessary to use indirect management for the implementation of the measure.
- (10) The Commission is to ensure a level of protection of the financial interests of the Union with regard to entities and persons entrusted with the implementation of Union funds by indirect management as provided for in Article 154(3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046. To this end, such entities and persons are to be subject to an assessment of their systems and procedures in accordance with Article 154(4) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046⁴ and, if necessary, to appropriate supervisory measures in accordance with Article 154(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 before a contribution agreement can be signed.
- (11) It is appropriate to authorise the award of grants without a call for proposals and to provide for the conditions for awarding those grants.
- (12) It is necessary to allow for the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 116(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046.
- (13) In order to allow for flexibility in the implementation of the measure, it is appropriate to define changes which should not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046.
- (14) The European Parliament and the Council have been informed of the exceptional assistance measure to be adopted by this Decision, in accordance with Article 25(3) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/947,

⁴ Except for the cases set out in Article 154(6) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046, where the Commission may decide not to require an ex-ante assessment.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1
The measure

The financing decision for the implementation of the exceptional assistance measure regarding Syria, for 2021, as set out in the Annex, is adopted.

The measure shall include the following action: “Support for stabilisation and reintegration in north-east Syria” as set in the Annex.

Article 2
Union contribution

The maximum Union contribution for the implementation of the measure for 2021 is set at EUR 18 500 000, and shall be financed from the appropriations entered in the budget line 14 02 03 10 of the general budget of the Union.

The appropriations provided for in the first paragraph may also cover interest due for late payment.

Article 3
Methods of implementation and entrusted entities or persons

The implementation of the actions carried out by way of indirect management, as set out in the Annex, may be entrusted to the entities or persons referred to or selected in accordance with the criteria laid down in point 6 of that Annex.

Article 4
Grants

Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals in accordance with the conditions set out in point 6 of the Annex. Grants may be awarded to the body/bodies selected in accordance with point 6 of the Annex.

Article 5
Duration of the measure

The maximum duration of the exceptional assistance measure adopted under this Decision shall be 18 months. The authorising officer responsible may decide to extend this period twice by a further period of up to six months, up to a total maximum duration of 30 months, under the conditions laid down in Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/947.

If the implementation of this measure or any of its components is suspended owing to 'force majeure' or circumstances beyond the control of the contracting authority and its implementing partner(s), the period of suspension shall not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the implementation of this measure.

Article 6
Flexibility clause

Cumulated changes to the allocations maximum Union contribution not exceeding 20 % of the contribution set in the first paragraph of Article 2 of this Decision, or cumulated changes to the allocations of specific actions not exceeding 20 % of that contribution, as well as extensions of the implementation period shall not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 where those changes do not significantly affect the nature and objectives of the actions.

The authorising officer responsible may apply the changes referred to in the first paragraph. Those changes shall be applied in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and proportionality.

Done at Brussels, 18.8.2021

For the Commission
Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
High Representative / Vice-President