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ANNEX

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe

Exceptional Assistance Measure regarding Syria

1. IDENTIFICATION

Action:	Continued support to peace and stabilisation efforts in Syria
Action Reference:	NDICI CR 2021 / 41
Cost:	EUR 12 750 000 (European Union (EU) contribution).
Budget Line:	14 02 03 10
Duration:	Maximum 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) 2021/947.
Lead service:	FPI

2. ACTION SUMMARY

With the overall aim to support peace and stabilisation in Syria, the action will continue to promote efforts for a political solution to the Syrian conflict and to promote stabilisation in areas liberated from Da'esh by the Global Coalition against Da'esh.

Despite the limited progress in the UN-led peace process in Geneva, the EU remains committed to supporting the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 (UNSCR 2254 adopted on 18 December 2015), and the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria, as a political transition remains the only viable path towards a lasting peace and reconciliation process. In addition, there is a pressing need to strengthen resilience by addressing the primary and protracted needs of vulnerable communities in parts of north-east Syria liberated from Da'esh.

To do so, the action foresees two components: firstly, it will support dialogue, mediation and peacebuilding actions through a fourth phase of the EU Syria Peace Initiative - co-funded by Germany (component 1) and, secondly, it will expand on current interventions in the water sector needed to safeguard public health, livelihoods and stability in north-east Syria (component 2).

3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

3.1 BACKGROUND

A decade of conflicts in Syria has severely affected the living conditions of the Syrian population, and the country remains in a dire and protracted political, humanitarian, and economic crisis with a stalled political process. By 2021, over half of the Syrian population continues to be displaced and a similar number of Syrians is considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance.

The Syrian regime has re-established its control over large parts of Syria's territory, but violence and military activity continue, particularly in the north-west but also in other parts of the country. As a result of over ten years of fighting, more than a third of Syria's civilian infrastructure has been destroyed or damaged¹. The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the existing humanitarian crisis that left communities exhausted from years of war and displacement.

The first component of this 18-month action will support the process towards a viable solution to the Syrian conflict, building on achievements under past iterations and the ongoing third phase of the EU Syria Peace Initiative. Despite the general impasse in the political process, the iterations of the EU Syria Peace Initiative have provided a quick and flexible approach to emerging political and peace building opportunities, and the link between the various peace building tracks (Constitutional Committee members, international and Syrian civil society actors) that keeps the process towards a political solution alive. Dialogue and capacity building formats have brought together Constitutional Committee members with civil society actors, while local dialogue has also been promoted (e.g. on women's empowerment, legal rights, and peace education). The EU Syria Peace Initiative supported Syrian civil society to engage in the political process, notably through support to the Civil Society Support Room. It has also supported events in the framework of the Syria Brussels Conferences on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region. This new phase will continue to offer financial, technical, and analytical support to efforts related to the peace process, while increasing the effectiveness of actions through stronger engagement of local civil society actors in the peace architecture.

The second component will contribute to stabilisation through a more reliable access to water, which represents a fundamental need with an impact on health, livelihoods and stability. Intervening in this sector will benefit communities as well as returnees who wish to reintegrate in their communities of origin by complementing ongoing interventions in the water sector. Since 2019, the implementing partner Solidarités International has strengthened local resilience through the rehabilitation of water pumping stations and networks in around 10 locations. In addition, it contributed to improving the living conditions of local farmers with increased access to irrigation water for livelihood opportunities. A third party monitoring exercise conducted this year illustrated that the project has adequately completed its activities, including with maintenance, and it is working to address some additional assessments in some rural villages which remain not connected to the networks and therefore do not receive water through the rehabilitated stations. The new action will continue to address both urgent and

¹ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/after-ten-years-war-conflict-still-paralyses-syria>

protracted needs in this vital sector with the additional objective of increasing livelihood opportunities.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR CRISIS RESPONSE ACTIONS UNDER THE RAPID RESPONSE PILLAR OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION INSTRUMENT

Promoting an inclusive transition negotiated by all parties under the auspices of the United Nations is among the strategic objectives set in the EU's Strategy for Syria. To achieve it, EU's commitment and support remain instrumental to contribute to paving the way to a political transition that remains the only viable path towards lasting peace and reconciliation – even more at a time when there is a strong need to break the prolonged and protracted political stalemate on this process. At the same time, evidence from the ground calls for addressing the dire situation in north-east Syria as the available primary services have proved to be insufficient to reach the entire population, starting from the water sector as drinking and irrigation water infrastructures were heavily affected by the fighting and the poor maintenance over the decade of conflict. This constitutes an exceptional and unforeseen situation in the sense of Article 4(4) of the NDICI Regulation. An adequate response cannot be provided under any other European Union Instrument due to the urgency with which the funds are required and due to available resources already being firmly committed.

Annex IV, paragraph 1, second paragraph, points (a), (b), (g) and (q) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 specifically provides for the use of the NDICI rapid response pillar to (a) support, through the provision of technical and logistical assistance, for the efforts undertaken by international, regional and local organisations and by State and civil society actors in promoting confidence-building, mediation, dialogue and reconciliation, transitional justice, women's and youth empowerment, in particular with regard to community tensions and protracted conflicts; (b) support for the implementation of UNSCRs on women, youth, peace and security; (g) support for measures necessary to start the rehabilitation and reconstruction of key infrastructure, housing, public buildings and economic assets, and essential productive capacity, as well as other measures for the re-starting of economic activity, the generation of employment and the establishment of the minimum conditions necessary for sustainable social development, and (q) support for measures to promote the development and organisation of civil society and its participation in the political process, including measures to enhance the role of women in such processes and measures to promote independent, pluralist and professional media.

3.3 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In line with the EU Strategy for Syria and as recalled in the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of 18 February 2019², the Action should not entail activities amounting to reconstruction.

The action builds on the assumption that Syria's conflict parties and stakeholders do not prevent international support efforts; that the security situation in Syria allows for sufficient access and safety to support peacebuilding and stabilisations activities; and that local non-governmental actors have sufficient capacity to work together and receive support.

² Foreign Affairs Council, Meeting n°3673, Brussels, 18/02/2019

Risks	High, medium, low	Mitigating measures
<p>Security risk:</p> <p>An escalation of armed conflict hampers the implementation of the activities on the ground.</p>	Medium	<p>The security situation will be closely monitored. In case of security concerns, the implementing partners will adapt projects' activities accordingly.</p>
<p>Political risk:</p> <p>Changing political developments have an impact on the governance of the targeted locations, including those with denied access.</p>	Medium	<p>The Action will be subject to regular risk analyses and monitoring. Activities are to be conducted as per guidelines set in the EU Strategy for Syria. These will be suspended if the political situation does not allow implementation of the Action with the planned stakeholders.</p> <p>As during the first three phases, the Syria Peace Initiative programme is designed to adapt to changing political dynamics.</p> <p>A vetting process of the local partners will allow the sufficient level of political neutrality.</p>
<p>Operational risk:</p> <p>Reduced access to water for political reasons or due to serious drought delays the implementation on the ground.</p>	Medium to high	<p>The implementing partners will continue to monitor the situation on the ground and advocate for the non-politisation of the water supply. In case of serious drought the project activities will have to be re-adapted with through humanitarian operations to ensure access to water.</p> <p>The Action is designed to adapt to changing political dynamics, including through vetting of local stakeholders. In case activities on the ground cannot be implemented, the Syria Peace Initiative will rely on relevant actors outside Syria.</p>
<p>Operational risk:</p> <p>Local peacebuilding and rehabilitation activities are undermined due to military</p>	Medium	<p>The implementing partner will take the needed precautionary measures based on pre-defined standard operating procedures.</p>

developments.		
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4. OBJECTIVES

4.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the action is to support peace and stabilisation efforts in Syria.

4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- 4.2.1 To contribute to a negotiated political transition in Syria in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 of 2015 (component 1);
- 4.2.2 To contribute to stabilisation in areas liberated from Da'esh by the Global Coalition against Da'esh in north-east Syria (component 2).

5. ACTION COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The main expected results/outcomes include:

Expected Result (1): Dialogue, mediation and peacebuilding initiatives between Syrian conflict parties are strengthened.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.1.1 Continue to provide logistical and technical support to Syrian and international stakeholders in the UN-led negotiation process, including the office of the United Nations Special Envoy;
- 5.1.2 Organise dialogue, mediation and peacebuilding initiatives among Syrian and international stakeholders, relevant for the peace process (meetings, workshops, training programmes);
- 5.1.3 Include Syrian civil society organisations, women, minority groups or specific advocacy groups in dialogue, mediation and peacebuilding initiatives, in particular with relevant conflict parties;
- 5.1.4 Identify peacebuilding opportunities through stakeholder and conflict analyses;
- 5.1.5 Advice on adequate coordination and information sharing mechanisms relevant to the dialogue process.

Expected Result (2): Access to drinkable and irrigation water has improved in north-east Syria.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.2.1 Rehabilitate water pumping stations and networks for drinkable and irrigation water;
- 5.2.2 Improve reliability of power supply in water pumping stations;
- 5.2.3 Enhance the capacities of local water department staff to operate and maintain the water pumping stations and networks;
- 5.2.4 Rehabilitate irrigation systems for agricultural production;
- 5.2.5 Enhance the capacities of local Agricultural and Irrigation Departments to operate and maintain the irrigation systems for agricultural production.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

The Commission will ensure that the appropriate EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures³.

6.1.1 Grant: direct award (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant

The grant will be awarded to achieve objective 4.2.2 in section 4 and expected result 2 in section 5, namely to contribute to stabilisation in areas liberated by the Global Coalition in north-east Syria through access to the minimum level of drinkable and irrigation water has improved for the population in north-east Syria.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

Potential applicants for funding are non-governmental organisations with a) extensive experience, b) established presence, and c) established coordinations mechanisms with international and local relevant actors in north-east Syria.

(c) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because **the action entails crisis management aid as referred to in Article 195(a) and as defined in Article 2(21) of the Financial Regulation** at the date of the Financing Decision.

6.1.2 Indirect management with a Member State Organisation

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with the *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ). This implementation entails achieving objective 4.2.1 in section 4 and expected result 1 in section 5, namely to contribute to a negotiated political transition in Syria, through strengthened dialogue, mediation and peacebuilding initiatives between Syrian conflict parties. The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: strong credentials as an EU Member State development Agency working in supporting the peace process; established presence and network both in Beirut and in Geneva; successful management of the first three phases of the present Syria Peace Initiative (see section 3.1 Background).

In case the envisaged entity would need to be replaced, the Commission's services may select another replacement entity using the same first two criteria above.

6.2 INDICATIVE BUDGET

The total European Union contribution under this Financing Decision **will not exceed EUR 12,750,000**. A breakdown among components is provided hereunder, and is indicative.

Indicative budget breakdown

³ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please 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 between the published legal acts and the updates on the website, it is the OJ version that prevails.

Components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified
Objective 4.2.1 / Component 1: Support to the fourth phase of the Syria Peace Initiative		
6.1.2 – Indirect management with the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)	5 000 000	5 000 000
Objective 4.2.2. / Component 2: Addressing urgent and protracted needs in the water sector in volatile north-east Syria		
6.1.1 – Direct grant (direct management)	7 750 000	n/a
Total	12 750 000	5 000 000

6.3 ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The action shall be implemented under indirect management for Objective 4.2.1/component 1 and direct management for objective 4.2.2/component 2. It will be devolved and sub-delegated to the **European Union Delegation to Syria**, with the support of the Commission for the conclusion of the contracts implementing the action.

6.4 PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner(s) shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final report. Each report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the Logframe matrix. The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

6.5 EVALUATION

Having regard to the nature of the action, an evaluation will not be carried out for this action or its components.

The Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

6.6 AUDIT

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

The financing of the audit shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

6.7 COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU.

This action shall contain communication and visibility measures which shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action, to be elaborated at the start of implementation.

In terms of legal obligations on communication and visibility, the measures shall be implemented by the Commission, the partner country, contractors, grant beneficiaries and/or entrusted entities. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, the financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements.

The Communication and Visibility Requirements for European Union External Action (or any succeeding document) shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations.

Acknowledging that activities financed under this action will be politically sensitive and/or may constitute a security risk for the implementing partner/beneficiaries, the communication and visibility plan for this action should develop a differentiated approach to satisfy the requirements from the legal obligations to which EU external funding is bound to without putting at risk the actions supported by this measure.

7. COMPLEMENTARITY, COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The overall coordination on this action will be ensured through regular exchanges between the EU Delegation to Syria, other EU Services and EU Member States.

Regarding the first component on the continuation of the Syria Peace initiative, given its political nature and the numerous non-governmental organisations involved, close monitoring and coordination will continue to be ensured through the existing information mechanism at contract level. In this context, systematic exchanges of information and consultations will continue to take place between the implementing partner and the EU services under the direct political guidance of the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The second component of this action will address urgent and protracted needs in the water sector to promote stabilisation and is complementary to resilience actions funded by the EU in Syria. The implementing partner of this component will have strong coordination systems in place with other international actors funding and implementing likeminded initiatives.