

EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the 'Madad Fund'
Action Document for Vocational Education and Training & Higher Education Programme for vulnerable Syrian youth

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Vocational Education and Training & Higher Education Programme for vulnerable Syrians and disadvantaged youth from host communities		
Total cost	Total estimated cost: EUR 32,100,000 Total amount drawn from the Trust Fund: EUR 32,100,000		
Aid method / Method of implementation	Project Approach Component 1 – direct management – direct award to Stichting Spark Component 2 – direct management - direct award to German Jordanian University		
DAC-code	11420	Sector	Higher Education

2. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

Before the war in Syria, the participation of the age group 18-24 in higher education was 20%. Today, four years later, this has dropped dramatically to almost half, and among the more than 400,000 of this age group having fled the country, less than 5% have access to higher education today. With this gap the risk rises for radical groups to establish a breeding ground for its ideas and recruit young people for the armed conflict in Syria, or to seek refuge in Europe.

Thus the need to improve access for young Syrians to higher education is acute. Not targeting the needs of vulnerable Syrians youth in the region is a risk, since the stability of the Middle East for a major part depends on maintaining its human and intellectual capital. Providing educating for Syrian youth is crucial. But many HE institutions within Syria ceased to function as a consequence of the conflict, and HE institutions in host countries are unable to deal with the large numbers of students who wish to enrol.²

The overwhelming demand for higher education by far outstrips the availability of resources in the region. While some 7,000 Syrian students could continue studies outside Syria with the help of several scholarship initiatives, more than 90,000 would need to be covered. It is therefore crucial that limited available resources are deployed strategically whilst producing more sustainable and longer-term local and regional solutions. This can only be done in close partnership with host governments and through existing HE institutions in the region, choosing a cost-effective approach.

2.1. Summary of the action and its objectives

The overall objective of this regional project is to provide services allowing Syrian IDPs inside Syria and Syrian refugees as well as disadvantaged youth from host communities in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq to follow further education with the objective to improve their social-economic perspective in life.

Specific objective 1: To provide access to higher and vocational education for IDPs, refugees and disadvantaged youth in host communities:

1. To support the delivery of bachelor programs on higher education for IDPs, refugees and disadvantaged youth in host communities in Syria, Lebanon, Kurdistan Region Iraq, Jordan and Turkey;
2. To support the delivery of vocational education for IDPs, refugees and disadvantaged youth in host communities in Lebanon and Jordan;
3. To support the delivery of distance learning to refugees, IDPs and disadvantaged youth in host communities in Kurdistan Region Iraq.

Specific objective 2: Setting up additional support mechanism for coaching, livelihood, transport and access to university facilities for the students who are participating in these programs.

This action document builds on analysis that has been provided by a recent EU-funded expert study, which has been subject to inclusive stakeholder consultations since February 2015¹

In following key recommendations of the expert study, the objective of the action is increased participation and equal access to further and higher education in the neighbouring countries without being able to continue their studies or had to abandon their studies as a result of the war and displacements.

The action proposed is the establishment of a programme, which supports higher and vocational education providers in the region to address education needs of young Syrians (mainly in the age group 18-24) and disadvantaged youth in host countries in the region (Kurdistan Region Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey) as well as disadvantaged youth from the host communities. This Action Document will:

- take stock of existing project experiences in this field;
- meet needs of the target group for participating in EQF levels 3, 4, 5 and 6 (or equivalent) education: the programme will target university programmes at BA level (first university cycle) and vocational education at tertiary level.
- provide guidance and orientation for the target group to identify the most appropriate education opportunity;
- support equal access to further and higher education to Syrians and disadvantaged young people in host communities;
- the importance to provide subsistence and travel allowances to Syrian students

¹ Study to Design a Programme / Clearinghouse Providing Access to Higher Education for Syrian Refugees and Internal Displaced Persons, Submission: 24th of March 2015, Team: Irene LORISIKA, Leon CREMONINI, Malaz SAFAR JALANI (ENPI 2014 350-391_171014).

- contribute to the wellbeing of young people by providing economic opportunities
- contribute to better co-ordination and to continuously improving further and higher education interventions in the region;
- further promote the use of e-learning tools and approaches in further and higher education.

As a result, this programme shall reach and assist 3000 young Syrians and disadvantaged youth in host communities mainly through a combination of full-time scholarships, full time enrolment in Higher Education and vocational in the region.

In particular, the proposed action contributes to the implementation of EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat under section 2.2.5, where the Madad Fund is called upon to i.a. Explore further possibilities to support neighbouring countries and universities in providing higher education services and to *Explore further opportunities for Syrian students and researchers through scholarships in Europe and vocational education opportunities in the region.*

2.2. Context

2.2.1 Country context

According to the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-2016 (<http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/>), all indicators are that the human costs of the Syria crisis will continue to grow in 2015 and 2016, with continuing population movements, and deepening vulnerabilities.

The overall planning assumptions for 2016 are that armed conflict and insecurity will continue inside Syria, despite a recently announced ceasefire for February 2016; that an effective overall peace agreement will not yet be achieved and implemented; and that refugees will continue to flee Syria and seek international protection, despite measures to restrict admission in some countries in the region. Additional Syrian refugees have arrived in the four host countries during 2015, which – very close to the forecast 10 months ago of 4.27 million by end-2015 – has brought the total regional refugee population up to 4.29 million by November 2015. More than half of these refugees are children.

Albeit middle-income countries, the countries neighbouring Syria have been severely affected by the crisis which strained the coping abilities of millions of vulnerable people in these impacted communities. Many refugees are living in already poor areas where there are limited livelihood opportunities, and where housing and social services are stretched, exacerbating vulnerabilities among the local population.

On 17 December 2015, the **Lebanon** Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) for 2016 was launched, as the second year to the 2015-2016 LCRP. The plan aims to reach 1.9 million individuals with protection and direct assistance, and 2.1 million individuals with service delivery, economic recovery, and community services. The LCRP funding requirements amount to 2.48 billion for 2016 of which 35% is dedicated to stabilisation programmes whilst 65% is dedicated to the humanitarian response. The 2016 plan enshrines three strategic priorities, including the expansion of economic and livelihood opportunities benefiting local economies and the most vulnerable communities (SO3). The 2016 response constitutes a transitional plan to the four-

year framework (2017-2020) that will expand the stabilisation and development focus and facilitate transition of crisis response to national structures and systems, whilst maintaining the integrated humanitarian and stabilisation response to the projected protracted crisis.

Within this frame, education has remained a key priority of the EU and the Government of Lebanon; the further development of the Reaching All Children in Education (RACE) II strategy, also demonstrates its commitment to youth, skills-building and vocational training in Lebanon. The preliminary target is to reach 22,000 young females and males (15+ years) enrolled in technical and vocational education by school year 2020-2021 (10,000 by 2016-2017).

In **Jordan**, the Government launched on 18 October 2015 the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) for the years 2016 – 18 (<http://www.jrpsc.org>), which is rather articulated and sets clear outputs in the area of education, health, water, public services, livelihood and resilience etc.

For the resilience-related needs relevant to the Madad Fund, the new 3-year JRP indicates for 2016 alone needs of USD 250m for education, 183m for health, 266m for livelihoods and food security, and 310m for WASH.

In terms of the 2015 JRP results, much has been achieved over the past year despite severe funding shortfalls. For example:

- Access to education improved: more than 143,000 Syrian refugee boys and girls enrolled in public schools this year, and 50,000 Syrian boys and girls have been provided with remedial education.
- Access to Justice has improved: 70,000 Syrian refugees and Jordanians in host communities reached with legal advice and/or information.
- Communicable disease control has been strengthened: over 100,000 Syrian children under five were vaccinated against polio.

However, these successes have been achieved against a background of increased vulnerability. Many refugee families have spent their savings, sold their assets, and lost access to their support networks, forcing them to take extreme measures in order to cope.

Meanwhile, vulnerable Jordanians living in communities with high concentrations of refugees are being increasingly affected. The Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment carried out between April and July 2015, under MOPIC supervision, found severe vulnerability levels across four key service delivery sectors; education, health, solid waste management and WASH, particularly in areas with high concentrations of Syrians. Although vulnerability is increasing, aid funding is reducing. About 34.5 % of the total USD2.99 billion JRP2015 requirements has so far been committed for 2015, indicating that for the fourth year; two thirds of needs at a minimum remain unfunded.

The **Turkey** Chapter of the 3RP 2016 foresees a total budget of USD 807 million including USD 607 million for the refugee component and USD 200 million for the resilience component. Turkey's Country Plan provides for a nearly threefold increase in spending on livelihoods, compared to the RRP6, and reflects Turkey's

commitment to development that builds resilience. Spending on livelihoods accounts for nine per cent of total planned spending; roughly 81 per cent of funding for livelihoods aims to build resilience. In governorates with a high concentration of Syrian refugees and in refugee camps in south-eastern Turkey, new livelihoods generating initiatives will be launched, and existing ones will be expanded, with new investments to boost job creation. In all cases, implementing livelihoods initiatives and projects requires finding a productive combination of strengthening the capacity of available institutions, the engagement of the private sector in financing innovative initiatives and identification of key growth sectors, including those for women. Separately the EU and MS are negotiating an aid package to Turkey between EUR 3 and 6 billion.

In **Iraq**, the 3RP seeks a total of USD 426 million for 2015, made up of USD 318 million for the refugee component and USD 108 million for the resilience component. Iraq's plan was developed in the context of ongoing major internal displacement in that country. In Iraq, nine per cent of all interventions of the 3RP are focussed on livelihoods. As part of the short-term response, there is still a need for cash assistance activities, such as cash-for work, particularly for the most vulnerable households. However, the overall strategy acknowledges the need to shift to more sustainable support, with a market-oriented approach, strengthening the local economy as a whole to support the creation of jobs through the development of the private sector. Consequently, partnerships with the private sector for the development of market systems will be strengthened.

However, as of late September 2015, the resilience pillar in the 3RP remained even more underfunded than the humanitarian refugee pillar, with an average of around 15% of required funding having been committed.

2.2.2 Sector context: policies and challenges

The Higher Education institutions in host countries are unable to deal with the large numbers of students who wish to enrol. On the other, many Syrian refugees cannot pursue their educational goals as they do not have the necessary financial means to sustain their studies.

The target group of this programme are Syrian refugees of university age (18-24). A large number of Syrian students have either been displaced inside Syria or fled the country and have settled down in neighbouring countries, the majority in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. They face a very unique situation: not only are their participation rates in further and higher education lower than those of their peers in host countries, but they also face a significant drop in participation vis-à-vis the Syrian access rate before 2011. The latter circumstance in particular indicates a considerable unmet demand for further and higher education.

The table below shows estimates of the Syrian Persons of Concern (PoC), aged between 18 and 24 as of end 2014². The table also shows the gap to fill with the

² For IDPs the information as of March 2015 is used, provided via the EU Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), because there has been a very significant increase in person of concern (over one million).

intervention to reach potential pre-war participation levels of about 20%. These calculations are rough estimates meant solely to give a sense of the problem's scale.

Syrian Students in need in Syria and outside Syria

Country	Syrians aged 18-24 in the country (est.)	Syrians enrolled in higher education	20% target	Current Participation	Gap to fill with intervention
Syria (2010)	3,340,500 ^(b)	661,281 ^(a)		20%	
Lebanon	146,456	8,549	29,291	6%	20,742
Jordan	77,718	6,057	15,544	8%	9,487
Turkey	145,310	1,784	29,062	1%	27,278
Syria IDPs (2014)	969,760 ^(d)	164,859 (not possible to determine) ^(c)	193,952	17%	29,093
Iraq, Egypt, Other	54,552	4,224	10,910	8%	6,686
Total (excl. Syria 2010)	1,393,796	185,473	278,759	13%	93,286

^(a) Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics

^(b) Estimation based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Population Division (2013). ^(c) A note of caution: This, more than the figures for the other countries, is a very rough estimate meant solely to give a sense of scale of the problem within the country.

^(d) Estimation based on an IDP population of 7.6m (reported by the EU Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO)).

Jordan

Since there are accurate (albeit fluctuating over time) data from UNHCR about the refugee population in Jordan, including a breakdown for the 18-24 age group (not available for all neighbouring countries), this information is used as the base for extrapolating the demand in the other countries (whilst remaining well aware that the situations differ and that this exercise is meant to provide a sense of the problem). In Jordan the 18-24 population of Syrian refugees is about 29% of the 18-59 age group, which in turn is 44% of the total refugee population (and this percentage is similar all neighbouring countries).

The ranking of Jordanian universities is low, which is caused by low quality and a high unemployment rate amongst Jordan's university graduates, which represents a negative return on investment from the national tertiary education system. There are two key issues. First, employers have noted for several years that the Kingdom's universities are not consistently delivering graduates with the skills and training required for the workforce. Second, there is too much focus on academic as opposed to vocational training. .

The vocational training sector is also providing a bleak picture, whereby low enrolment rates reflect the negative image of the system. A recent independent assessment of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system identified limited linkages between labour market needs and Jordan's vocational training institutes, poor instructor qualifications, lack of proper equipment for training, and overall lack of official occupational standards validated by employers to ensure there is a clear frame of reference for all training programs. It also noted that the VET sector was "yielding poorly trained and uncommitted workers". The EU has signed a EUR 52 million budget support programme with the Ministry of Labour

to support the vocational education and training program. The programme should also strengthen the vocational schools and higher vocational education.

In Jordan there is an intensive cooperation between the donors in the field of education and higher education which has been established since 2008 in relation to the World Bank led Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy. Currently there is a regional sector donor group meeting every month which focuses on school construction and the support to Syrian refugees as well as a separate donor interest group under leadership of UNHCR and UNESO which focuses on all issues higher education for refugee students; this group is meeting every month. There are separate bilateral discussions with USAID and the German Embassy to harmonize our efforts and avoid overlap of activities in the field of higher education which have started in November 2015.

Lebanon

Recent studies among youth affected by the Syrian crisis in Lebanon in 2016 show that 94 per cent of the non-Lebanese youth aged 15-24 are not enrolled in formal education in Lebanon, with the 15 to 18 year old age group being the most affected (as nearly half were enrolled in the past in Syria)⁶. The key barriers to enrolment continue to be tuition fees, the need to work, transportation costs and difficult curriculum. Participation in informal education is similarly low. Moreover, the inability of the Lebanese job market to absorb the influx of a labour force into the productive economy disproportionately affects youth: youth unemployment amongst Syrian youth is estimated at 53% among 19-24 year olds (64% of females and 49% of economically active youth).⁷

The EU has been funding VET initiatives for refugees from Syria since the beginning of the crisis through different operators (AVSI, UNHCR, AMEL, etc).

In terms of education for adolescents and youth, the Minister of Education and Higher Education opened its vocational and technical public schools for the 2015/2016 school year for the enrolment of non-Lebanese adolescents aged 14 to 19 years.

The international community has responded to this vision and in December 2015, the registration of up to 6,000 Lebanese and non-Lebanese adolescents into MEHE's technical schools was processed and fully covered with donor contributions to UNICEF, where UNHCR also supported the enrolment of 1,000 Lebanese and non-Lebanese adolescents.

In Lebanon, the EU has supported UNRWA to promote the access and retention of Palestinian Refugees from Syria in primary and secondary education the past school years, but no interventions have targeted the PRS in VET nor in Higher Education. Several projects have supported Palestinian refugees in Lebanon to access scholarships through the UNRWA scholarships programme. Around 400 students have benefited from these interventions since 2010..

⁶ UNICEF-MADAD Generation Found Partnership, March 2016.

⁷ UNICEF, as the unemployment rate is calculated by dividing the number of individuals looking for job by the number of economically active individuals.

In Lebanon the EU is about to sign a 3 Million Euro support to the Vocation Education sector under its bilateral envelop in the framework of the CLOSER decision. This technical assistance intervention will be implemented by GIZ internal services and will be focused in making VET system more practiced oriented.

Turkey

In Turkey, the Government has lifted university entry fees for Syrian's under temporary protection. A scholarship programme is being run by the Government (via "Turkey Scholarships Programme" implemented by YTB) to support Turkish language training and living expenses of a limited number of Syrian students. Universities are in dire need for funds to provide such scholarships to Syrian students. There is a need for further information, guidance and counselling activities targeting Syrian youth who have the potential to enter a higher education institution.

Higher Education includes all post-secondary institutions, which offers at least two years of formal education. After graduating from high school, students can enrol in higher education which is compatible with the Bologna three-cycle system. Higher education institutions can be classified as follows: Universities, Institutes of High Technology, Post-Secondary Vocational Schools, other Higher Education Institutions (Military and Police Academies). There are two types of universities in Turkey, namely State and Non-Profit Foundation universities.

During the last decade, the number of universities dramatically increased: since 2006 around 110 universities were established. As of March 2016, there are 193 universities and 8 independent post-secondary vocational schools in Turkey.

The Technical and Vocational Education system in Turkey includes two main dimensions: theoretical (school training) and practical (in-company training).

The responsibility for the overall coordination of the response of the Government of Turkey to the Syrian refugee crisis lies with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) under the leadership of a Chief Advisor. PMO has established Working Groups to address all refugee issues in a comprehensive and coherent way. One of the Working Groups, in which the Council of Higher Education is represented, is dedicated to education. A field government coordination structure has been established by PMO at the governorate level. Thereby the provincial governors take the lead in field coordination. The European Union Delegation is chairing a Refugee Contact group to exchange information on a regular basis. It consists of representatives from EU Member States, UN agencies and IFIs.

Future interventions in the field of education and higher education will be funded from the special fund from the EU and MS to relieve the Turkey.

Kurdistan Region in Iraq (KRI)

In the area of higher education, key governmental stakeholders are the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Planning. The Ministry of Migration and Displacement is responsible for IDPs/refugees needs. The National Education Strategy 2011-2020 serves as a national guide for education projects and interventions.

During the last decades, the Iraqi education sector has suffered from underfunding, degradation of infrastructure and depreciation of human resources. The current

financial crisis linked to the plummeting oil price has a negative impact on the education sector. Against the background of Da'esh threat, an increased share of public spending is diverted towards the defence and security sector. The presence of 3.2 million internally displaced persons and 240.000 Syrian refugees increase the pressure. While the IDPs are distributed all over Iraq but with a strong presence in KRI, the Syrian refugees are only present in KRI. Whilst higher education in KRI is delivered mostly in Kurdish language, courses for Syrian refugees shall rather be delivered in Arabic. Public higher education is generally provided free of charge.

Responsibility for the higher educational system which covers the age group as from 18 years lies with the Committee for Higher Education. In Kurdistan Region there are at present some 19 state and state-recognised private higher education institutions.

Vocational training is a branch of the secondary education system and is delivered by vocational centres. The vocational training stage usually lasts three years leading to public examinations. TVET suffers from many years of limited budget allocations and insufficient policy development. Some symptoms of the current situation are: poor if not obsolete educational infrastructure including equipment, irrelevance of curricula in relation to labour market requirements, lack of substantial practical training, fragmentation of responsibilities into different ministries (MoP, MoE, MoHESR, MoLSA), very low quality of teachers with no updated knowledge and skills, decreasing number of students, thus leading to a high teacher/students ratio, students' unclear status in programs/awards, inadequate opportunities for youth and adults in life-long professional education and training, weak organizational structures and partnerships, and inefficient resource mobilization, distribution and utilization.

Overlapping issues in the region

There are sufficient institutes of private and public education. The higher education is split between a public and a private sector in the countries of the region. The capacity absorption in the public sector is limited while in the private sector more places are available. The universities are autonomous institutions. One of the most heard complaints is that the universities are not consistently delivering graduates with the skills and training required for the workforce and there is a focus on academic as opposed to vocational training. The institutions are open to receive Syrian refugee students as long as they comply with existing regulations on access and finance.

Most of the TVET institutions that should provide the necessary skills and competencies for employment tend to offer traditional subjects with little relevance for the labour market. In addition, there are inadequate statutory linkages between TVET institutions and employers.

There are cultural and religious similarities with host communities throughout the region. This also applies for early marriages for women, which includes stereotypes on the role of women in society.

The labour market is very tensed in all countries. There is a great uncertainty about future employment and the capacity to have sufficient income after completion of university / VET programmes.

The availability of irregular migration paths to EU countries over the Aegean sea) provide an alternative to study

The employment for students with who participate in Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs is more imminent since their studies courses are shorter and hence they are sooner available on the labour market. In Turkey, Jordan Lebanon and Iraq laws have been adopted arranging the employment of Syrians in the private sector and allowing the vocational training to support the economic employment opportunities which have been agreed under, for example, the Jordan Compact.

It should be noted that on some issues the situation in Turkey is notably different. Not only is higher education free for Syrians through a special waiver by the Turkish Government, the quality of the higher and the vocational education has made great progress in the last 10 years. However, language is a barrier, as the main language of instruction is Turkish and existing Arabic programmes charge relatively high tuition

2.3. Lessons learnt

The following lessons are learnt from the implementation of the current programs:

- More important is the contribution that has taken place by the capacity development under the previous Tempus and current Erasmus+ programs which aim at regional cooperation, the strengthening of the capacity of universities to deal with international cooperation projects and the sudden influx of students, as well as grant management. This has been crucial in providing the local universities such as GJU with the relevant project management skills as well as familiarization with EU procedures for the financial reporting of large scale individual grants for students.
- The recognition of (certified) copies is a major issue hampering students in the access to formal learning structures in the host countries. For this reason it is strongly recommended that the host countries address the issue of recognition of prior learning for students with interrupted studies.⁸
- A research under 931 students in Jordan shows that a majority of students favour bachelor degrees (62%), and to a lesser extent vocational education (16%) and on-line learning.
- Higher education is a field that is difficult to regulate and allows for different parallel systems to co-exist, such as vocation, higher and distance learning in both the private and public sector. This seems to be reflected in the variety of initiatives in the field of vocational and higher education that already exists in the region. These initiatives are usually independent from one another (in some countries there is little co-ordination among the different donors and providers). Co-ordination and information-sharing between donors, as is the case in Jordan, would improve efficiency, reduce overlap and cater for higher numbers of Syrians in need of further and higher education.

⁸ Registering rights, Syrian refugees and the documentation of births, marriages, and deaths in Jordan, NRC report 2015

- The Jamiiti initiative, a portal set up by UNESCO with EU funding⁹ was not used by students for the registration of courses offered by the EU, most students respond to initiatives through Facebook or via persons of interest.¹⁰
- To ensure project effectiveness, participation by local organisations is essential. There are systemic weaknesses of the higher education systems in the region (including for example a lack of capacity to cater for local students). Activities should be regionally-driven and relate to national development strategies and plans. Moreover, in the case of refugees, the needs of hosting communities should also be taken into account: the implemented actions should also benefit to local institutions/ students to the extent possible.
- The target of beneficiaries can be decreased if the registration fees increase as has happened with the projects supporting scholarships for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.
- In order to increase the number of beneficiaries is crucial to negotiate important reductions in registration fees from universities and VET authorities and implementing actors.
- The Ministry is a stakeholder mostly at policy level responsible for creating the conditions for registration and conditions for participation of study. The public and private sector universities and institutes of vocational education are autonomous institutions and have indicated to the implementing partners (SPAN and GJU) that they are interested to participate in the programs.
- The current programming in Jordan by the national public and private sector is important for building resilience and provides a boost for confidence in national institutions. Experience from the Higher Education project¹¹ in Jordan shows that initial movers strengthens the reputation of the local organisations such as the German Jordanian University, Zarqa University and Al-Quds college while it facilitates easy management.
- Planning for support to Syrian refugees automatically leads to support to disadvantaged communities in the host countries, a process started by Jordan has resulted in similar responses by the governments in Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey
- Though migration is a major issue for Syrian students, in the most recent survey with Syrian students in Jordan some 60% indicated that they wanted to stay in the region (Jordan, Syria or GCC states) while 16% preferred to move to Europe¹².

⁹ ENPI/2012/310-461: Sustaining Quality Education and Promoting Skills Development Opportunities for Young Syrian Refugees in Jordan.

¹⁰ According to the British Council most students responded to Facebook and word of mouth campaigns. The Jordanian initiative by GJU was supported by a religious singer and received more than 200,000 hits in a week time, leading to 7000 registrations.

¹¹ Contract ENI 2015/368-804: The provision of higher education to Syrian refugees and disadvantaged Jordanians.

¹² Draft study by the British Council about living conditions under 7000 registered students in Jordan.

- In crisis situations, tangible and quick results are critical to build confidence in national institutions, to reduce the possibility of a 'lost generation' of higher education students, and to reinforce trust in the international community.
- For the target group, it is difficult to identify and find the most appropriate further or higher education opportunity. Interlinking activities between language learning and further education is important and should be strengthened.
- Several studies have demonstrated the need to provide Syrian refugee students with additional support for the subsistence of them and their families.
- The projects should focus on equal access to higher and vocational education with specific outreach measures.
- The existing offer of scholarships for refugee students from Syria is very limited. To optimise the project's outcomes, the project should look beyond the immediate financial constraints of individual Syrians aged 18-24 who wish to access tertiary education, and also address problems such as the adequacy of the target group's skill set and social integration.
- In this light it is important to seek at an early stage the involvement of UNHCR and NGOs for the development of transparent selection procedures and the communication process to students in host communities and the camps.
- The skills that the target group will have to develop for the future must not be limited to academic higher education but should also cover tertiary level technical and vocational studies, needed both for the future reconstruction of Syria and to contribute to host communities. Therefore, the project should promote both further and higher education.
- Addressing the youth educational need of Syrian refugees without also including host institutions and host populations risks to contradict the potential success of the action.

2.4. Complementary actions

The Erasmus+ programme is active in all countries in the region Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Syria. The programme focuses on the development of higher education through capacity development, scholarships and credit mobility in regional partnerships between universities with partners in Europe. The programme is supported in each country with a National Erasmus+ Office (NEO).

With the EUR 12 million already allocated from the Madad Trust Fund in support of Higher Education, a first regional project has been awarded after a competitive grant award procedure to the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). This project shall in particular provide support already during the academic year 2016/2017 to reach and assist young Syrians through a combination of full-time scholarships, short courses, language training and student-support throughout the region. The programme will be implemented from spring 2016 onwards and aims to provide circa 300 direct scholarships to refugees from Syria and disadvantaged students from host communities in the neighbouring countries in order to complete their higher

education and shorter-course vocational studies. In addition, it is estimated that circa 4000 students will benefit from language access courses.

Other component focus on strengthening of the capacity of Higher Education institutions, the provision of advisory and counselling services to students, language training and the organization of calls for proposal for seminars.

It is foreseen that the second regional project will intensively cooperate with the first regional project by providing information and participation in donor coordination groups. The regional components will be open to institutes that will participate in components 1 and 2 of the second regional project. Information will be shared by bringing DAAD and the foreseen implementing partners together.

The German Government is active in the region in the field of support refugees in higher education through 2 different programmes: the DAFI programme and the New Perspectives Scholarship which aims in particular Syrian refugees.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), as part of its global special initiative "Refugees" has commissioned GIZ to implement the project 'New Perspectives through Academic Education and Training for Young Jordanians and Syrians'.

The project provides scholarships for Master studies at Jordanian universities in all fields of study with the exception of medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry and law for Syrian refugees and disadvantaged Jordanians in hosting communities. The project also provides human capacity development activities in the field of conflict management and prevention of violence. UNHCR's DAFI higher education scholarship programme, best known by its acronym DAFI, plays an integral role in enabling refugees worldwide to access higher education. Since its inception in 1992, the DAFI programme has grown considerably, enabling over 2,240 refugee students annually to study at universities and colleges in 41 countries of asylum in 2014. The DAFI programme enables young refugees to continue post-secondary education and motivates refugee children to stay in school and succeed academically. For students and graduates, the DAFI programme serves as a foundation for social and professional development, allowing them to build careers in competitive fields of employment.

Parallel, the Dutch Government has provided EUR 5 million funding for the basis of the regional project which is currently project implemented by Spark in Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan which is aimed at providing some 2000 students a variety of higher education, short and long term vocational education and distance learning programs. This program has started in November 2015.

In Jordan, a pilot programme for Higher Education has begun in August 2015 which is funded fully by the EU.¹³ Through an initiative of local public and private sector organisations led by the German Jordanian University in partnership with Yarmouk University, Zarqa University and Al-Quds College, a co-ordinated response in the field of higher education has been developed. It will serve 3,100 students of which 70% Syrian and 30% disadvantaged Jordanian in academic and language skills training; 750 in distance education and MOOCS, 80 in HND level 5 (=associate degree), 290 in BA and 20 in MD courses. Separately 400 students will receive one

¹³ Contract ENI 2015/368-804: The provision of higher education to Syrian refugees and disadvantaged Jordanians.

year vocational education under an EU funded UNESCO¹⁴ contract as well as 400 youngsters receiving a 6 months vocational orientation program in Zaatari. This program has started in February 2016.

The total EU Funding for Humanitarian Aid for the Syrian crisis since January 2012 amounts to €817m, while the total overall EU (i.e. EU + Member States) funding for the crisis amounts to €3.35bn (for relief and recovery assistance to Syrians in their country and to refugees and their host communities in neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt). In the light of the London pledge conference of 4 February 2016 this commitment has sharply increased to an additional € 5bn with separately some € 3bn pledged for the assistance to Turkey, which also will target higher and vocational education

In separate developments:

- UNICEF has launched a campaign called No Lost Generation referring to the Syrian crisis, but so far not addressed the issue of higher education since this is outside their mandate. Within Lebanon an inter-agency UN response has also been set-up.
- The EU has also supported students from Syria and countries of the region through the Erasmus Mundus programme, and has provided capacity building assistance to higher education institutions through the Tempus programme.
- The countries of the region, including Syria, are now partner countries of the newly launched Erasmus + programme.

Beyond the above mentioned pilot programme, the EU supports from 2013 to 2017 the Ministry of Education through a budget support programme of EUR 83 million¹⁵ to provide access to 130,000 Syrian into basic education provided by the public sector. The EU has just signed a 52 million Euro BS programme in Jordan aimed at strengthening Jordanian employment through supporting the TVET system of the MoE, MoL and MoHE.

In Iraq, the EU is funding the programme titled "*Reforming technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Iraq*" implemented by UNESCO. The overall objective of the project is to increase the competitiveness and relevance of TVET in line with the international standards so that it can deliver quality education to young people to prepare them for wage and self-employment. The specific objectives are: 1. strengthen the TVET sub-sector through an endorsed and operational governance framework; 2. assess the labour market to obtain statistically representative data on the structure of employment to design a sectorial approach to curricula development and modernization and to better understand how to engage the private sector in TVET activities; 3. build the capacity of TVET teachers, instructors, managers and supervisors based on a long term plan of action; 4. create enabling conditions for a smooth school to work transition for graduates of TVET colleges, institutes and technical universities and for a better access to non-formal vocational and entrepreneurship training by vulnerable groups. The direct beneficiaries of the

¹⁴ Contract ENPI/2012/310-461 Sustaining Quality Education and Promoting Skills Development Opportunities for Young Syrian Refugees in Jordan

¹⁵ It is foreseen that the budget support programme will be increased by EUR 20 million under a separate decision of the Madad TF.

programme are young people, who choose TVET and employers, who are in need of work force with technical and vocational skill (incl. Syrian people).

2.5. Donor co-ordination

At a broader level the EU is actively contributing to overall donor co-ordination under the auspices of the United Nations in the framework of the 3RP that integrates humanitarian, development and macro-fiscal interventions to increase coherence between humanitarian and development and national and regional priorities.

The European Commission also hosts regular meetings of the Core donor group on Syria, which unite the key institutional and bilateral donors to the Syrian crisis in the field of resilience and recovery funding.

In country, the relevant EU Delegations are leading co-ordination with EU Member States and are also important partners in the co-ordination platforms now established for the various National Response Plans to the refugee crisis.

The Madad Trust Fund Management is in the lead in order to ensure co-ordination with MS contributing to the fund. Moreover, the Fund Management will also co-ordinate with its selected implementing partners or other stakeholders on regional level or cross border issues.

On country level, all donors operate within the regulatory boundaries of the countries and in agreement with the relevant authorities. Thus, there is co-ordination with the national authorities,¹⁶ usually through specific working groups.¹⁷ The lead in this co-ordination will be entrusted into the EU Delegation/EUTF field staff.

Stakeholders and donors for this programme will also group around the proposed clearinghouse mechanism to provide information to vulnerable Syrian youth on existing opportunities in further and higher education, e.g. a Steering Committee to gather the main stakeholders should meet regularly.

In Jordan the donor co-operation in the field of higher education is just starting between the German Embassy, DfID, USAID, UNESCO, UNHCR, individual organizations of Higher Education and vocational education and the EU.

In Lebanon, the response to the Syrian crisis in the education sector is coordinated by the RACE executive committee. It is chaired by the Minister of Education and Higher Education and includes all key actors in the sector (EU, German Embassy, DFID/British Embassy, WB, USAID, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNESCO, Italian Embassy/Italian Cooperation, and Embassy of the Netherlands).

Ad hoc meetings on education have been organised amongst the key donors and implementers (EU, German Embassy, DFID/British Embassy, WB, USAID, UNICEF, UNHCR, etc).

¹⁶ However, in higher education there is very little co-ordination and different donors might deal directly with the Ministry responsible for higher education or with other ministries (e.g. Planning and International Co-operation or Labour).

¹⁷ For example the Jordan Response Platform to the Syrian Crisis is a partnership mechanism between the Government of Jordan, donors, and UN agencies to address the Syrian refugee crisis, operating through several thematic working groups (e.g. on health and education). There is a donor group on education which also tackles the Syrian refugee crisis

A working group on refugees and Higher Education co-chaired by UNESCO and UNHCR and the participation of has recently been created. Main players are included (EU, AUB Mastercard foundation, LASER, SPARK, DAAD consortium etc).

3. DETAILED DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective of this regional project is to provide services allowing Syrian IDPs inside Syria and Syrian refugees as well as disadvantaged youth from host communities in Jordan, Lebanon and KRI to follow further education with the objective to improve their social-economic perspective in life.

Specific objective 1: To provide access to higher and vocational education for IDPs, refugees and disadvantaged youth in host communities:

- a) To support the delivery of bachelor programs on higher education for IDPs, refugees and disadvantaged youth in host communities in Syria, Lebanon, KRI and Jordan;
- b) To support the delivery of vocational education for IDPs, refugees and disadvantaged youth in host communities in Syria, Lebanon, KRI and Jordan;
- c) The support the delivery of distance learning to refugees, IDPs and disadvantaged youth in host communities in KRI.

Specific objective 2: Setting up additional support mechanism for coaching, livelihood, transport and access to university facilities for the students who are participating in these programs.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

The action has main results which can be broken down into a number of key, in order of priority of results.

The expected results are:

The expected results for the specific objective 1: list the expected results

1. 2350 Syrian refugees, IDPs and disadvantaged youth in host communities will have received a bachelor degree program in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, KRI and Turkey;
2. 710 Syrian refugees, IDPs and disadvantaged youth in host communities will have received a certificate in vocational education in Jordan and Lebanon;
3. 100 Syrian refugees and IDPs will have received a distance learning certificate in the field of ICT in KRI;
4. 3000 Syrian, IDPs and host community students will have received full scholarships;

5. 3000 Syrian. IDPs and host community students will have received living allowances;
6. 3000 Syrian, IDPs and host community students will have received complementary services such as coaching, transport;
7. 40 disadvantaged host community students will have received a master degree in Jordan.

The expected results for the specific objective 2: will be achieved through the following activities and sub-activities in 2 components as shown below

There will be 2 major components¹⁸:

Component 1: Providing access to higher, vocational and distance education in Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Lebanon: Syrian refugee students, IDPs and disadvantaged Lebanese, Iraqis and Turkish youth are enrolled in recognised higher education programmes, vocational education programmes and in distance education programmes in the field of engineering, economics health care, sciences, social sciences and education/teacher training.

- 1.1. *To design and implement develop a communication mechanism with students using modern media in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq*
- 1.2. *To design and implement a mechanism to provide transparent registration and selection procedures for students in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and KRI*
- 1.3. *To implement a visibility campaign under students and sharing of best practices in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and KRI*
- 1.4. *To provide 500 students with full scholarships in the field of Higher Education on Bachelor level including transport and subsistence allowance in Turkey*
- 1.5. *To provide 400 students with full scholarships in the field of Higher Education on Bachelor level including transport and subsistence allowance in Lebanon;*
- 1.6. *To provide 250 students with full scholarships in the field of Higher Education on Bachelor level including transport and subsistence allowance in KRI;*
- 1.7. *To provide 100 students with full scholarships in the field of Distance Education in KRI;*
- 1.8. *To provide 900 students with full scholarships in the field of Higher Education on Bachelor level in Syrian territories under FSA control;*
- 1.9. *To provide 250 students with full scholarships equally divided between 1 and 2 years study at Vocational Education including transport and subsistence allowance in Lebanon;*
- 1.10. *To provide complementary services to participating students related to transparent information and selection procedures, including coaching, transport and living allowances for regular students;*
- 1.11. *To monitor the implementation of the supported initiatives.*

Component 2: Providing access to higher and vocational education in Jordan: Syrian refugee

¹⁸ The numbers expressed in the Action Document have been formulated after consultation with the EU Delegations in Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan as well as Spark and the German Jordanian University.

students and disadvantaged Jordanians are enrolled in recognised higher education programmes and vocational education programmes in the field of engineering, economics health care, sciences, social sciences and education/teacher training.

- 2.1. *To design and implement a communication mechanism with students using modern media in Jordan*
- 2.2. *The design and implementation of a mechanism to provide transparent registration and selection procedures for students in Jordan*
- 2.3. *The implementation of a visibility campaign under students and sharing of best practices in Jordan*
- 2.4. *To provide 700 students with full scholarships in the field of Higher Education on Bachelor level including transport and subsistence allowance in Jordan*
- 2.5. *To provide 460 students with full scholarships for 1 or 2,5 years Vocational Education including transport and subsistence allowance in Jordan*
- 2.6. *To provide complementary services to participating students related to transparent information and selection procedures, including coaching, transport and living allowances for regular students;*
- 2.7. *To monitor the implementation of the supported initiatives.*
- 2.8. *To enrol 40 disadvantaged host community students in graduate study scholarship programs towards a master degree*
- 2.9.

3.3 Risks and assumptions

Risks:

- The situation in Syria and in host countries does deteriorate.
- No additional availabilities of international assistance and finance.
- Actors in the region lose interest in providing required information to link to the initiative of this project
- National accreditation systems need to have the organisational, technical and financial capacity to engage on online education.
- The recognition of prior learning and the accreditation of previously gained certificates and diplomas inside Syria and in particular in the diplomas provided by education establishments under the FSA.
- Higher education institutions are open to using some resources (funding, time, personnel) in projects to support access and study success of vulnerable youth. with support from this programme
- The management of expectations, this programs aims to serve a limited group of students who are currently registered while at the end of the schoolyear 2015/2016 another cohort of thousands of Syrian refugee students will ask for access to higher education.
- The provision of higher education asks for minimal project duration of 54 months. Currently the duration of the programme cannot be extended beyond December 2019, leaving the education programme a semester short of implementation for those who follow a bachelor degree programme and want to start in year 1.

The assumptions for the success of the project and its implementation include:

External factors:

- No further deterioration of Security situation
- Willingness of the international donor community to continue to engage in funding higher education

Internal factors:

- Willingness of host communities to engage in the project.
- Approval of the Programme by local and national authorities.
- Involvement and commitment of relevant institutional committees and concerned line ministries (e.g. in the validation of certified copies of diplomas and recognition of prior learning arrangements) is ensured.
- Continuing willingness to endure hardship not leading to migration or radicalization
- The tensions in host communities with very strong presence of Syrian refugees will not escalate further.
- Identified host institutions are co-operative and receptive to projects in support for Syrian refugees

Mitigating measures will be further defined in the actual projects, but have been already taken or will be considered, including:

- Spark and the GJU are well informed about the latest development in the field of HE to Syrian refugees. There is sufficient evidence that institutions are available and ready in all three countries. It should be noted that there is an ongoing political dialogue, for example here in Jordan where the German and the EU Ambassadors will visit the MoHE on 21 April.
- By working together with HE institutions in providing scholarships and building capacity, a firm working relationship will be established with key local institutions, which in turn will provide leverage in lobbying and advocacy efforts.
- Through working closely with the beneficiaries receiving scholarships and the training, real-time information of barriers to access to education and labour market is collected. Furthermore, by empowering student organizations and working intensively with the refugee population and HE institutions, this will organically provide input.
- Surveys and focus groups with up to one thousand beneficiary students in primarily Turkey, Syria (SIG) and KRI have been held. Consultations have been taking place with host universities to negotiate lower below market rate access and in all countries meeting have been held with national authorities to attain a green light for operations. Priority will be to work with reliable and affordable, preferably public HE institutions,

- Of utmost importance is that this program will also benefit the host institutions and host populations to garner the required local support and avoid a backlash against the refugee beneficiaries. In all countries under this proposal, especially in Jordan and Lebanon, tensions between host community and refugees are rising. Therefore, in all interventions proposed host community students are also eligible, as long as they are meet similar socio-economic needs. All interventions will be implemented with host community universities and local organizations were possible, in order to build the capacity of HE institutions in the host countries.
- The extension will be the subject of a later discussion in the Madad TF. In case it will be impossible to extend the project implementation period to the requested 54 months, a solution will be sought whereby the students for the bachelor programme in the countries will be selected form a group of students with interrupted education or provided with a summer programme in order to accelerate their learning route, allowing them to finish their bachelor degree before December 2019.

3.4 Cross-cutting issues

A number of cross cutting issues have been identified.

Host communities

Syrian refugees are vulnerable and are the prime target of this intervention. However, it has become evident to reach out to the disadvantaged youth from the host communities, allowing them to participate in the support programmes for Syrians. This is an important issue for all neighbouring countries. Most refugees live in the regions that are bordering with Syria and which are mostly underdeveloped. Jordan is ahead in this discussion, where the Government has arranged that 30% of all aid packages to Syrians should also benefit disadvantaged Jordanians. In other countries the discussion has just started and no concrete percentages are known.

The programme will be implemented in an instable scenario. Thus, as in humanitarian aid interventions, special attention has to be paid to security issues (e.g. that students have secure access to services) and to the application of do-no-harm principles (e.g. avoid conflicts that can be triggered by a high degree of competition for few opportunities), to inclusiveness (e.g. to give access to the ones most in need, and not to exclude students because of their financial situation).

Gender

Gender issues have to be strictly considered in all funded projects, as linked to the current situation: equal opportunities of young men and women in the offered education opportunities has to be guaranteed and monitored. International trends in gender inequalities in higher education can be determined by examining the changes in the composition of the student population in higher education, the relative share of degrees awarded to women each year, the levels of education attained by men and women and, lastly, the differences between the subjects studied by men and women. The last few decades have been marked by greater growth in the participation of women than men in higher education, which initially led to a reduction in gender inequalities and their subsequent reversal.¹⁹ On average there are more women than men in higher education and this is the same for Syrians refugees currently studying under the Dutch funded regional programme whereby the ratio is 56% in favour of female students.²⁰ In Jordan the recruitment is currently underway and no precise figures can be given.

Current ratio in Lebanon is 32% males and 68% females, however, on a regional level the gender ratio is 44% males to 56% females. SPARK will maintain a strict minimum 50% female intake for September, although our experience with the first 1517 scholarships demonstrates that this is not going to be difficult to attain.

There are various obstacles for Syrian female students to access higher education, especially the IDP's in Syria with the active war still taking place. SPARK promotes increasing women participation and access to higher education through different measures and actions. In Syria, the vocational institution locations were identified in relatively safe rural locations that enable families to send their daughters to school close to home. Female student's transportation has been arranged by SPARK local implementing partner from and to the vocational centres where they study. SPARK relevancy and understanding to the local context lead to the development of a special female vocational program (Midwifery) to encourage female students to continue their education. This has helped bring on board the more conservative communities especially in the Deraa region.

Regarding the gender policy for scholarships in the other four programme countries, SPARK gender policy is reflected on the pre-selection phase by maximizing our on the ground presence and outreach through induction sessions in areas with considerable number of Syrian students. In this promotion phase already, female promoters, especially also current female scholarship holders, carry out a large proportion of the promotional activity. Working closely with local NGO's with extensive outreach to Syrian population impacts on the significant incensement of female applicants to SPARK scholarship. As part of SPARK public communication policy to Syrian communities, the printed outreach material is also gender sensitive with an attention to an equal representation of female and male figures on its promotional materials and a strong attention on the publication of success stories from female students. Attention to safe learning environments and transport to campus also contribute to higher female intake and retention.

It is noted that in Turkey the gender disparity, notably for drop-outs, remains an issue.. This overall educational gap in Turkey, which is in favour of men, can partly be explained by cultural reasons on the one hand and the relatively low wage increases resulting from a higher education on the other hand. Especially the latter often makes women refrain from

¹⁹ OEC: Higher Education to 2030. Paris 2008. Chapter The Reversal of Gender Inequalities in Higher Education: An On-going Trend, p.265 e.a.

²⁰ Jordan: 50%, Turkey: 62% M - 38% F; Lebanon: 36% M - 68% F; KRG: 50%.

pursuing higher education as they would have to pay additionally for child, elderly and homecare.

Radicalization

Several studies highlight the importance of the role of education in countering radicalization has gained prominence among policymakers and practitioners.²¹ A famous blogger under the Syrian community in Jordan is Yehya Hawa who is known for his countering violent extremism messages. He announced the current EU grants for Syrian refugees in Jordan. His message was watched more than 250,000 in a period of 2 weeks in January 2016. In this context it is noted that the study and coaching guidance is of great importance, which is a crucial element of the support offered by participating institutions.

Migration

In the research carried out under a sample of refugee students in Jordan as well as under the wider Jordanian refugee population by the Norwegian Refugee Council, have pointed out that many refugees consider migration as a top priority. This especially effects young people who have indicated that they want to leave²². The EU is responding through the ENP to mobilise efforts to support inclusive economic and social development; creating job opportunities for youth will be among key measures of economic stabilisation. Safe and legal mobility on the one hand and tackling irregular migration, human trafficking and smuggling on the other are further priorities. This also applies to Syrian refugees. Finally, greater attention will be paid to working with partners on energy security and climate action. According to HR/VP Frederica Mogherini: 'We have to build together a safer environment, try to solve the many crises of our common region, support the development and the growth of the poorest areas, and address the root causes of migration. The measures set out today seek to find ways to strengthen together the resilience of our and our partners' societies, and our ability to effectively work together on our common purposes'.²³

Projects funded under this programme will integrate a Rights-Based Approach in each step of the project cycle from identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring to evaluation

3.5 Stakeholders

The following stakeholders have been identified:

- EU Member States contributing to the Trust Fund; government of the country the actions are implemented
- Facility management, project partners (further and higher education providers, CSOs, government agencies in the region).

²¹ The Role of Education in Countering Radicalization in Bangladesh, 2015, by the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute

²² Draft study by the British Council about living conditions under 7000 registered students in Jordan

²³ From a speech from Frederica Mogherini on 18 November 2015 with the release of the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

- Immediate beneficiaries: Syrian students and families and vulnerable youth in host countries
- Final beneficiaries: young Syrians and their families, Syrian post-crisis society, further and higher education providers in Syria and in the region, young people in the Middle East.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1 Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with the partner country, referred to in Article 184(2)(b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012.

4.2 Indicative operational implementation period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3.2 will be carried out is 80 months. A possible extension of the implementation period may be decided by the Manager, and immediately communicated to the Operational Board.

4.3 Implementation components and modules

Component 1

Direct award of a grant to Spark Foundation.

Direct award to Spark is considered justified as the organisation is a non-for-profit public institution which has extensive experience in the region and has an excellent track record about managing grant contracts for the EU. Spark has had extensive negotiations with the representatives of the Madad fund for the implementation of this project. Spark and the partners are experienced in providing education to Syrian refugees as well as providing small grants to students under a Dutch funded contract while the second phase is presented to the Madad TF for funding. Spark has given evidence of 'sound financial management'²⁵. The size of the implementation of the programmes by Spark as well as their outreach efficiency and cost effectiveness, positions the organization very well for implementing a further regional program that aims to provide a massive increase of providing study opportunities for Syrian students.

Component 2

Direct award of a grant to German Jordanian University (GJU).

The direct award is considered justified as the GJU is implementing grant contract ENI/2015/368-804 'the provision of higher education to Syrian refugees and disadvantaged Jordanians in Jordan'. The German Jordanian University is leader of a larger consortium involving Yarmuk University, Zarqa University and the Luminus. The GJU is a non-for-profit public institution which has extensive experience in the Tempus and Erasmus programs and has an excellent track record about managing grant contracts for the EU. The organisation and the partners are experienced in providing education to

²⁵ Assessment by the Dutch Government under COCA –Checklist Organizational Capacity

Syrian refugees as well as providing small grants to students under Contract. The GJU is providing group is in the current grant contract providing 85% of the funds to students and their living conditions. The GJU has given evidence of 'sound financial management' in previous grant projects under Tempus. The size of the implementation of the programmes by GJU as well as their outreach efficiency and cost effectiveness, positions both organizations very well for implementing a further regional program that aims to provide a massive increase of providing study opportunities for Syrian students. The GJU has the absorption capacity to take new partners on board as it has demonstrated with numerous Tempus and Erasmus+ projects. Also for this project several additional Jordanian universities and vocational training centres have expressed their interest to work with GJU.

There is urgency in the neighbouring countries to address the situation on higher education for the upcoming academic year²⁶. The crisis declaration allows for direct award of the contracting for both components 1 and 2²⁷. Both grant contracts can apply for full funding since 'the maximum possible rate of co-financing may be up to 100 % in accordance with Articles 192 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 if full funding is essential for the action to be carried out. The essentiality of full funding will be justified by the responsible authorising officer in the award decision, in respect of the principles of equal treatment and sound financial management. The contracting and financial management is in the hands of the Madad TF, while the supervision of the implementation is done by the EU Delegations on location.

4.4 Indicative budget

Module	Amount of total budget	Third party contribution
Component 1 Providing access to higher, vocational and distance education in Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Lebanon (through Spark Foundation) – grants, direct management	18,000,000	
Component 2 Providing access to higher and vocational education in Jordan (through German Jordanian University) – grants, direct management	13,600,000	
Evaluation and audit*		

²⁶ In Jordan 7000 students have registered in a database for further studies at GJU and in Lebanon some 6000 students have registered last year in a database at Spark.

²⁷ This is for Jordan reflected in the note of Director Mr Kohler to the Head of Delegation, Dr Wronecka (ARES 2283309 of 9 June 2014), followed by a note of director Mr Kohler to the Head of Delegation, Dr Wronecka (ARES 2015-1990626) expressing the extension of the crisis situation.

Communication and visibility*		
Contingencies	500 000	
Total	32,100,000	

- The costs of Evaluation and audit and Communication and visibility will be included in the projects' budgets and/or contracted separately via service contract(s).

4.5. Performance monitoring and reporting

Monitoring shall be ensured primarily through EU Delegations in-country and in particular with the assistance of specific Trust Fund field and liaison officers posted within the EU Delegations. In addition, the EU Trust Fund has an independent Monitoring and Evaluation exercise to accompany all Fund programmes and ensure that targets are met and lessons learnt can be incorporated into other EUTF actions.

The purpose of the EUTF Syria Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is to assess, across various levels, the degree to which the Overall Objective of the Trust Fund has been achieved. Partners implementing this Action will comply with the ad hoc Monitoring and Evaluation Framework developed for the EUTF Syria as well as with the reporting requirements and tools being developed by the EU Trust Fund.

The implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the Action and elaborate regular progress reports and final reports.

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).

The monitoring and evaluation exercises noted above will represent milestones in the implementation of the activities. These regular assessments will constitute a basis for a possible decision of suspension or revision of activities, should the conditions on the ground not allow for their proper implementation.

4.6. Evaluation and audit

Overall, evaluation of the EUTF is mandated by the Constitutive Agreement of the Fund (article 13): “The Trust Fund and the Actions financed by it will be subject to the evaluation rules applicable to EU external programmes, in order to ensure the respect of the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.” Detailed provisions for the Evaluation of EUTF-funded Actions are defined by the strategy for portfolio evaluations.

To support the fulfilment of the mandate of the EUTF reinforcing the EUTF capacity to bring a change in the cooperation area, the projects will carry out a number of evaluations.

Projects should carry out a final evaluation, and one external audit per year. A mid-term evaluation may also be considered. Whenever possible, evaluations will be jointly carried out by partners.

If necessary, ad hoc audits or expenditure verification assignments could be contracted by the European Commission for one or several contracts or agreements.

Audits and expenditure verification assignments will be carried out in conformity with the risk analysis in the frame of the yearly Audit Plan exercise conducted by the European Commission.

4.7. Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU. Beneficiaries, host communities and administrations in Syria's neighbouring countries, the European public, EU Members States and other stakeholders of the Trust Fund need to be informed about the EU's efforts as the leading donor in the Syria crisis response. Insufficient visibility of the EU's actions weakens the EU's political traction in the region and its standing in Europe. Unsatisfactory recognition of knowledge of EU assistance also has a potential to negatively affect the EU's political efforts to resolve the Syria crisis and its future role in a post-peace agreement transition.

Communication and visibility is an important part of all EUTF Syria programmes and must be factored in to underline the programme's importance at all stages of the planning and implementation. Each implementer is required to draw up a comprehensive visibility, communication and outreach plan for their respective target country/community and submit a copy for approval to the EUTF Syria Communication and Outreach Lead. The related costs will be covered by the project budgets. The measures shall be implemented by the implementing consortium/ia, and/or contractors, and/or grant beneficiaries. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, procurement and grant contracts.

The global objective of the EUTF Syria communication and visibility campaigns, and hence of the implementing partner, is to improve recognition, public awareness and visibility of the comprehensive and joint EU efforts to effectively address the consequences of the Syrian and Iraqi crises. This should be done by highlighting the Action's real-life impact and results among defined target audiences in the affected region but also vis-à-vis the general public, donors and stakeholders in the EU Member States.

The Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Action together with specific requirements for the EUTF Syria serve as a reference for the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the relevant contractual obligations. According to the EUTF Syria's Visibility and Communications strategy all communication and outreach campaigns must be evidence-based, people-oriented and easily understandable. Regional outreach and communication must be conflict sensitive, strategic, do no harm and mindful of the differentiation in messaging for beneficiaries and stakeholders in each country of operation of the Action. The campaigns must place the beneficiaries at the centre and thus ensure adequate ownership. Messaging should have a human face, be empathic, honest, transparent, direct, unambiguous, neutral and conducive to a highly sensitive human and political environment, in addition to being gender-sensitive and gender-balanced.

Furthermore, campaigns should also include components of participatory and engaging communication, where the beneficiary becomes a key actor. This will support the EUTF Syria's programmes in promoting social cohesion, inclusion, dialogue and help mitigate tensions and misperceptions between refugee and host communities.

Title/Number	Vocational Education and Training & Higher Education Programme for vulnerable Syrians and disadvantaged youth from host communities
Total cost	Total amount drawn from the Trust Fund: EUR 32,100,000

Comments & Questions from the Operational Board and answers

1. AUSTRIA

<p><i>This Action appears to be based on a study done in March 2015 (footnote no. 1). Could you indicate what other kinds of assessments have fed into designing this Action? (Please see also comments below on Risks and Assumptions).</i></p>	<p>In order to design the first Higher Education Program (presented May 2015), MADAD fund mobilised external expertise. The focus of the assignment was on the current situation. The report delivered is titled <i>Study to Design a Programme /Clearinghouse Providing Access to Higher Education for Syrian Refugees and Internal Displaced Persons</i>. A further study have been carried out by the British Council (please see footnote 11) whereby the target audience was consulted about their opinions.</p>
<p><i>Numbers appear to be based on consultation with EU Delegations, Spark and the German-Jordanian University (Footnote no. 18). Could you kindly indicate - what about the line ministries, what about the vocational training institutions and what about the large numbers of potential students? Could you say which of those have been included /consulted in preparing this Action? - The same would apply to host universities and national authorities. It would be very interesting to know what the results of these consultations have been (please refer also to the comment on risks and assumptions).</i></p>	<p>For KRG-Iraq: the Minister of Higher Education which endorsed to enrol up to 300 students in four year's bachelor's programs at all state universities (especially the Universities of Salah El Din, Dohuk and Sulimani). A written agreement and exchange of letter between SPARK and the Minister has set out the conditions and leaves room for a new additional intake in September 2016 is means are available. To date only Syrian refugees have been selected, but the need amongst Iraqi IDP's is large as well. There is no condition to admit non refugee students by the authorities. SPARK is officially registered with the KRG-I authorities. For Turkey: This academic year is the first time that Arabic education is provided by Turkish universities. This flows from a decision by the higher education council (YOK); YOK has recently decided that Syrian students can continue with their studies at Çukurova University in Adana, Gaziantep University, Harran University in Şanlıurfa, Kilis 7 Aralık University, Mustafa Kemal University in Hatay, Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü imam University and Mersin University. The rector of the University of Gaziantep, professor Coskun, has been instrumental in this lobby and has</p>

	<p>launched the first pilot at the University of Gaziantep, which we are supporting through outreach and selection of refugees for the scholarships.</p> <p>At the moment SPARK sponsors 100 students in the Arabic programme at the University of Gaziantep, with the potential to scale up for next year. SPARK been officially registered by the Turkish Government, creating ability to liaise and cooperate closely with them. There is no requirement to admit non-refugee (host community) students.</p> <p>For Lebanon: Universities and the higher vocational schools where the current SPARK scholarship students have already been admitted are all accredited from the Ministry of HE.</p> <p>SPARK has had intensive contact with the Ministry of Higher Education, and the receiving institutions admit the students within their mandate and have obtained and continue to obtain approval for new intakes.</p> <p>Most of SPARK vocational students in September intake can be placed at Omar El Mokhtar institution (a state owned / public vocational institution) that has to approval and ability to absorb large amount of students. The authorities have been requesting up to 30% admittance of Lebanese students into the scholarships.</p> <p>For Jordan: The MoHE was consulted early 2014 but indicated that they would not be able to implement such a grant program since it is a policy making body and not able to enforce this regulation on the main actors in higher education who are largely autonomous.</p>
<p>Target group: <i>a) Could you please indicate how implementation in Syria (IDPs in Syria are mentioned as one target group) is supposed to be possible? How would it be possible to reach students there?</i></p>	<p>The proposed implementing partner has been already working with existing universities in areas under FSA control for the last 4 years. The control/monitoring is carried out by independent NGOs.</p> <p>For the proposal in question, the proposed implementing partner has launched an IAT institute in May 2015 in cooperation with the International Agriculture Cooperation Office (IACO) of the Syrian Interim Government in Gaziantep.</p> <p>What started as pilot to rehabilitate the Agricultural education inside Syria turned into a centre - also supported by DFID and the Italian government on other food security programmes - and transformed itself into an independent organization supporting Agricultural programing inside Syria.</p> <p>At first, the project started in one location then was scaled in three other locations in opposition-controlled areas (Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, and Daraa). The direct</p>

	<p>beneficiaries of the project were 460 students (264 in Daraa, 60 in Homs, 78 in Idlib and 58 in Atareb) and 43 staff.</p> <p>Additionally, two Institutes of Applied Nursing are up and running in Daraa (Naseeb) to educate 95 Syrian students in Nursing and midwifery since 2015. The leadership includes mostly professors and professionals with MA and PhD degrees from Syrian universities, especially the University of Aleppo.</p> <p>As a security precaution, the project is designed to operate from 5 to 6 separate physical schools, to target 900 direct beneficiaries. These are divided in small groups to reduce the number of student gathering in every class/location and thereby reduce risk.</p> <p>Before the setting up the curriculum, Spark sponsored international workshops at the premises of GAP and UoG with experts from Wageningen University, GIZ, CIEHAM IAM Bari, Harran University, University of Gaziantep, GAPTEM, IBCM and individual experts</p>
<p><i>b) Stakeholders (chapter 3.5.): Wouldn't the young Syrians constitute the most important stakeholder group?</i></p>	<p>This is correct, the text says on p.23 'Immediate beneficiaries: Syrian students and families and vulnerable youth in host countries'. However also the group of disadvantaged youth from host communities is mentioned. In the text p.13 it describes for Jordan: 70% Syrian - 30% Jordanian principle has been established. Overall it is also formulated that the target audience is in majority, but not exclusively Syrian. From the SPARK text:</p> <p>In Jordan 30% of SPARK admitted students are Jordanian nationals, in Lebanon September intake for vocational students at Omar EL Mokhtar vocational institution, 30% will be Lebanese nationals. While with the Ministry of HE in KRG-Iraq, they are requesting we also admit Iraqi IDPs.</p> <p>In addition to the scholarship offered, SPARK provides a post enrolment student programs that focuses on integrating host communities and Syrians in community based initiatives, social entrepreneurship programs and business planning competition. I.e. GYEP Program organized last summer in Gaziantep, two of the awardees (1 Syrian and 1 Turkish) are jointly opening a cultural cafe in Gaziantep in the coming few weeks. These activities actively promote inter-community relations.</p>

<p>Project Design:</p> <p>Risks and Assumptions (p.19. Chapter 3.3.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 2: “No readiness of... higher education providers to participate ”, • No. 5: “Higher Education institutes ... have the capacities and are willing to participate in the program”, and: • No. 9: “Involvement and commitment of .relevant institutional committees and ... line ministries ... is ensured” - <p><i>In our opinion are all preconditions for this program/action to work and issues we feel should be known prior to any funding decision - and which we kindly ask you to clarify prior to any funding decision.</i></p> <p><i>Considering the fact that SPARK and the German-Jordanian University are as experienced as they are, it seems surprising that these key aspects / precondition (referred to in risks 2, 5 and 9) are apparently not known yet.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>On the other hand: No.7.: “to reach students who are interested to enrol” - wouldn’t that be something the project aims to achieve?</i> 	<p>Thank you the comment and you will find revised AD without risks No. 2, no. 5 and no 9.</p> <p>Instead we have included some text mostly in mitigating measures in order underling that the implementing partners do have expertise in the field. From this expertise we know that 14,000 students are enrolled and a new action for enrolment is foreseen for May 2016.</p>
<p><i>What exactly is the role of SPARK and the German-Jordan UNIVERSITY (GJU) in this Program /Action: for instance, would they develop curricula, provide scholarships or act as “brokers” to get students into VET and universities?</i></p>	<p>Spark will act mainly as a broker and in the case of Syria will support curricula development. GJU has largely the same role with the exception that some of the placements will be in their own university. Both organizations have a proven track record of doing this effectively and efficiently as demonstrated in the Action (p. 23). Both organizations have established databases in the countries and made agreements with universities to reduce the price of delivery.</p>

<p><i>Or else, is the program intended as something like a “scholarship program ”: if so, where exactly are the students/young people expected to study and how are they supposed to obtain their apprentice positions/ find training vacancies? Are these apprentice positions and places to study available? Is there something like distance education in Iraq and Syria, and if so, how does it work?</i></p>	<p>There are 2 systems for funding Higher Education in a refugee context: either through individual student grants (student basket) or through institutions: for efficiency and effectiveness the latter option is chosen. The economies of scale makes the choice for the second option</p> <p>For VET the institution will organize internships through their standard suppliers of job-placements; this is however -unfortunately- not applicable on the level of Higher Education in the countries in the MENA region. The text of the AD doesn't provide very specific details on this level, but the program is also including Iraq/KRG (see p.17-18). We have introduced some language to clarify that. Details of the program as subject to contractual negotiations.</p>
<p>Program Design /Preconditions: <i>According to “lesson learned” no. 1. (Chapter 2.3.), “It is strongly recommended that host countries address the issue of recognition of prior learning (p.11.)”. Could you kindly clarify:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who is this recommendation addressed to?</i> • <i>What are the preconditions for educational institutions to receive funding form this MADAD Action? E.g. do only those institutes, universities, etc. receive funding /participate in the program which guarantee to recognize prior learning?</i> 	<p>This is a statement relevant for enrolment into universities whereby the conditions are very specific in relation to the provision of documents that need to be submitted at Institutes of Higher Education in Jordan. However a national system in Jordan is developed for recognition of prior learning in a Tempus project 'Knowledge of Recognition procedures in ENPI Southern countries, in line with standard practice in EU institutions'. The project is supported by the Italian NARIC and the MoHE in Jordan and discussions have started now to establish a procedure for statement is for institutions</p> <p>There is the issue of the certificates for secondary education Tawjihi diploma's which is currently being discussed. Concerning registration at (notably) private universities: are no preconditions apart from offering the relevant quality programs at the right price.</p>

<p>General comments and queries: Considering the fact that there has been quite substantial budget support by the EU to the Jordanian education sector in recent years (e.g. 52 m EUR to Min. of Labour, 83 m EUR from 2013-2017 to Min. of Education, plus EUR 59.6 m to Min of Education 2011 - 2014 according to p. 13 of the “Budget Support to Jordanian Ministry of Education Action Document”) => What are the results to date? How have the results of these recent EU Contributions fed into this Action Document and into the selection of suggested implementing partners? (I am aware there lessons learned are mentioned, but I am not entirely sure how they feed into this action). Just a small request for clarification: p.13, lesson. No 14: “The project should focus on equal access ...” - Could you kindly clarify which project this would refer to? The two components to be managed by SPARK and the German -Jordan University? This entire MADAD Program (Action)? Any other smaller project that may be part of SPARE and the University’s work?</p>	<p>We would like to note that previous BS programs are not directly relevant for this Action since they deal with a different age group of Syrian refugees (age group 6-18) or a different target group. The upcoming BS of EUR 52 million in the field of vocational Education in Jordan targets mainly the Ministry of Labour and Education has only been launched in Nov 2015 and no activities have been taken place yet. Finally we have included in the lessons learned part a paragraph on our experience with Tempus and Erasmus+.</p> <p>Thank you for your observation and we have replaced project with the projects</p>
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2. SWEDEN

<p><i>Important not to forget the link to and needs of the labour markets. Will the selection of education programmes match the needs of the labour market? Imperative that the students will be able to find employment upon completion of their studies.</i></p>	<p>Thank you and - as mentioned already above with a similar question from the German representative - we have added text to address your comments in 2.2.2. Sector context, Overlapping issues.</p>
<p><i>Welcome commitments by host countries in London with regards to work permits and job opportunities for the refugee population.</i></p>	<p>Thank you for your comment and we refer to our reply above.</p>
<p><i>Is there sufficient capacity for implementing the programme both at universities but also at Ministry of Education?</i></p>	<p>Thank you for your comment and we have included a bullet point under lessons learned to address your query.</p>

<p><i>Welcome text on complementary actions and donor coordination. Important that Madad-funded efforts complement and add value to efforts funded by other donors and EU instruments.</i></p>	<p>Thank you for the comment. With your permission, we would suggest to add a text (as we did in the revised version) in the chapter Sector context and policies; in particular for Jordan.</p>
<p><i>Pleased to note that equal opportunities of young men and women will be guaranteed and monitored. However, a more thorough gender analysis in the initial stage of action planning is crucial in order to guarantee equal opportunities of women and men. Would welcome if you could elaborate on how (in the action document).</i></p>	<p>Thank you very much for your comments and you will find additional information in the revised version under 3.4 cross-cutting issues; Gender.</p>

3. GERMANY

<p><i>How is the program related to the ongoing program implemented by DAAD and what is the added value of financing a second scholarship program?</i></p>	<p>The first and second regional Action programs in support for Higher Education are complementary. The first regional project (implemented by DAAD and partners) focuses on the wider complex environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) capacity development and support to implementing universities b) language training c) providing information and advice to students d) bottom up and short courses by universities e) a limited grant number of contracts and living allowances for bachelor and academic courses (in total 340) <p>The second regional project - which proposed now - is focused solely on providing study grants and living allowances in the field of academic and vocational courses in the various countries (in total 3,000).</p>
<p><i>Content wise, it is not clear to me how the program “provides economic opportunities” for young people and how it contributes to better coordination of high education interventions.</i></p>	<p>Thank you and we have added text to address your comments in 2.2.2. Sector context, Overlapping issues. The coordination of both regional interventions and other relevant interventions by Germany, USAID as well as other donors and the national project in Jordan will take place through donor coordination group.</p>
<p><i>The indicators should be clearly linked to the components because a major part of the funding goes to the GJU.</i></p>	<p>All EU grant contracts in general and the specific contracts to implement this action in particular include performance indicators per component. We intend to differentiate between costs for student fees, transport, living allowances etc. through our negotiation with the implementing partner.</p>