

HIGHER EDUCATION



The Trust Fund promotes access to Higher and Further Education for refugee, IDPs and host communities through scholarship programmes.

While the Trust Fund's initial actions were focused on access to those programmes, recent projects pursue a more holistic approach that includes not only scholarships, but also career guidance, psychosocial support, and labour market-oriented activities.

To date, the Trust Fund has supported **11 actions and six lead implementing partners to improve access to higher and technical and vocational training education (TVET)**. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Jordanian University (GJU), SPARK, UNHCR Türkiye and, more recently, GIZ- are contributing to provide access to scholarships for bachelors', masters' and vocational programmes in Türkiye, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and, to a lesser extent, Egypt. DAAD in partnership with the Luminus Technical University College (LTUC), the Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education (NUFFIC), and Campus France, GJU

and SPARK, embarked on the second phase of their programmes in Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, respectively. The most recent actions, apart from scholarships, include psychosocial support (SPARK), labour market actions, e.g., training or access to jobs and internships (GJU,

SPARK), entrepreneurship support (SPARK, GJU), promotion of networks among and within universities (DAAD, GJU, SPARK), national advocacy (DAAD), social cohesion activities (GJU), capacity building and infrastructure improvements at vocational training schools (GIZ). Six actions are still being implemented.⁷

Globally, for all higher education actions, the indicator on access indicates an increase during this period compared to the previous results report (March 2023), reaching 9,022 students, and the associated planned targets. In terms of



→ 10. The following actions are still ongoing in Lebanon (GIZ: T04.231, DAAD: T04.220), Jordan (GJU: T04.166 and T04.215), Iraq (SPARK: T04.218) and Türkiye (SPARK: T04.168).

Higher Education - Disaggregated results

EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis

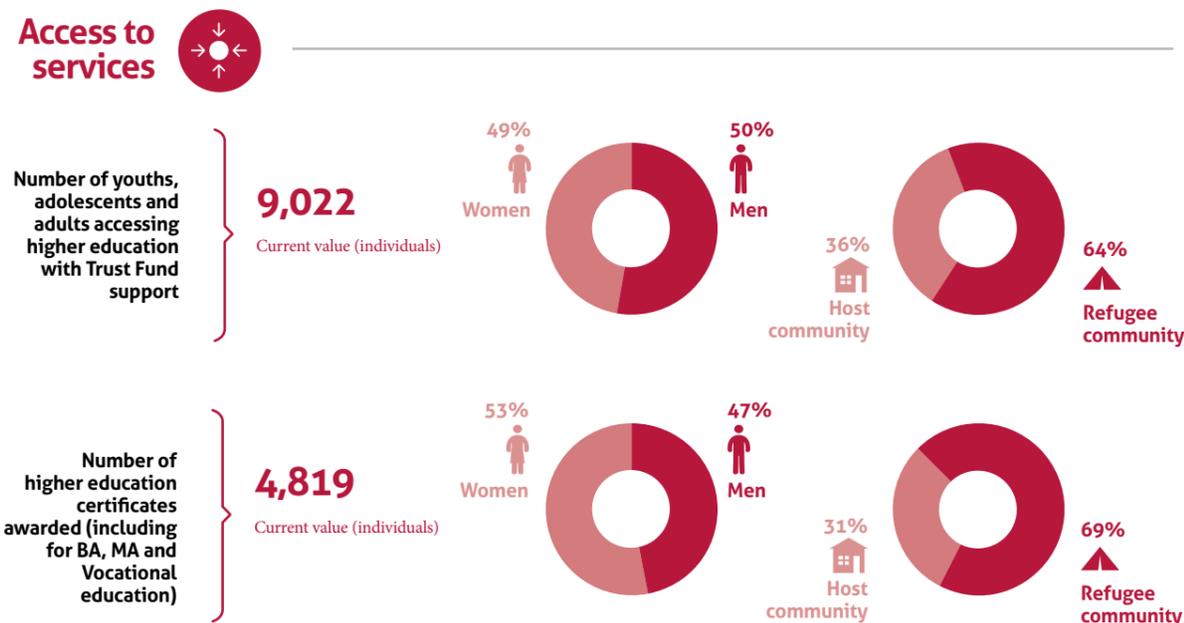


Figure 9: Trust Fund: Higher education results disaggregated by sex and community of origin (as of 31/03/2023)
*N.D.: Not disaggregated.

students accessing scholarships, women represent 48% and Syrian refugees account for 63% of the total.

To date, 4,819 higher and vocational certificates have been awarded (74% of the planned target). Women have graduated to a higher extent (53%) than men (47%), and refugees more than host community members (69% vs. 31%, respectively).

HIGHER EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN LEBANON

The EUTF's main partners to support higher education and TVET in Lebanon have been DAAD, SPARK and GIZ. Regarding **changes at individual level**, the outcome evaluation highlights that enrolment and retention in higher education has improved, and that attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of Syrian refugees and

host communities have positively changed since the beginning of the EUTF implementation. Implementing partners have overcome initial obstacles regarding lack of trust, especially by the Syrian community who was reluctant to share personal information. For this purpose, implementing partners used effective outreach strategies, including social media, actions by the EU Regional Network for Alumni and Young Professionals, specific advice on registration procedures and counselling. The EU Regional Network for Alumni promoted the scholarship opportunities -through the 'Network Talks' and the series of stakeholder dialogues "*Higher education in times of collapse*"- jointly with the National Erasmus+ Office in Lebanon. A survey (in January 2022) conducted with the HOPES-LEB scholarship holders⁸ evidenced that respondents were highly satisfied with their overall scholarship experience. However, "*they expressed the need for an increase of living allowances, English language courses and additional scholarship opportunities especially for PhD level*". Recently, implementing partners have noted a growing interest of Syrian refugees and host communities on vocational training vis-à-vis higher education. The evaluation underlines that this might be "*due to the rampant economic crisis and the low prospects of employment*

opportunities, many potential applicants to BA/MA degrees prefer to enrol in shorter training courses to obtain a faster return and employability in either the host countries or abroad". Additionally, Syrians can only work legally in agriculture, construction, cleaning, environment or become self-employed. There is limited data available on employability of former higher and technical education graduates. For TVET, to date, seven former students have accessed jobs. The outcome evaluation highlights that although some graduates might find employment opportunities in NGOs (paid in dollars) or in self-employment, and some IT graduates might find remote jobs, there is a need to enhance job counselling and job placement components in upcoming programmes.

On **changes** at the level of **local organisations and institutions**, the outcome evaluation confirms that partnerships with universities have been strengthened in the country. This has contributed to the establishment of better networks and to connect alumni in the region. It is worth mentioning that HOPES-LEB was behind the creation of a common space for all donors to put their higher education, TVET and youth calls for proposals. Implementing partners also used partnerships with community-

→ 11. Hopes Leb: Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians and vulnerable youth in Lebanon.



based organisations to widely disseminate the programmes, having contributed to develop capacities of local organisations. The partnership and cooperation between HOPES and the Lebanese University, the only public university in the country, resulted in a considerable saving on tuition fees, allowing to almost double the planned number of the scholarships provided. The EU Regional Network of Alumni and Young Professionals *“has been noted to be a convergence point from the most relevant higher interventions, not only in Lebanon, but in the region”*. Regarding further organisational changes, a ‘school advisory board’ - on a voluntary basis - has been established (GIZ) for TVET, *“bringing together teachers, principals, parents and private sector representatives on board in their geographical areas, and also building networking opportunities for graduates”*. The intervention (GIZ) is also supporting the development of photovoltaic installation capacities as part of the TVET curriculum, given solar energy is increasing in the country and as it falls under the construction sector, Syrian refugees can also access those jobs.

In terms of **changes at national policy or regulatory level**, the outcome evaluation notes that limited policy dialogue has been promoted on higher and technical education across the wider EUTF target countries. In Lebanon, the HOPES-LEB led

“Higher education in times of collapse” initiative has been observed as the *“most comprehensive and structured approach to policy dialogue on higher education”*, which aims at establishing a set of recommendations for helping the Lebanese Higher Education system to survive the next challenging years. According to the evaluation, this initiative was *“welcomed and actively supported by the line ministries.”* DAAD was asked to comment on the five-year Higher Education Plan (2022-2026) adopted at the end of 2022. Nevertheless, it is not clear to what extent any of its recommendations have been followed. In terms of TVET, at the time of the evaluation, there was a new TVET five-year plan 2022-2026 and the draft version of the National Strategic Framework for TVET 2023-2027. TVET General Director, implementing partners and donors are providing contributions, an approach garnered as a lesson learned from the National Strategic Framework 2018-2022. Line ministries strongly support TVET and have expressed the willingness to address dropouts from young people. At this level, accumulated experience from previous similar programmes and the sector expertise of the implementing partners (DAAD and GIZ) have been positive factors to higher education interventions. The unique position of providing higher and TVET education for Syrian refugees and host communities in a context of unaffordability and lack of

scholarships also counts as added value. Challenges continue to be the collapsing of the economy and the structural policy constraints for Syrian refugees to access the formal labour market. At institutional level, devaluation of teaching salaries and strikes are also affecting the learning environment.

HIGHER EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN JORDAN

The EUTF's main partner to support higher education in Jordan has been the German Jordanian University (GJU). DAAD had implemented a previous project already closed. The focus of higher education projects is now on a more comprehensive approach of supporting higher and technical education to providing a pathway to the labour market. The outcome evaluation underlines that most outcomes *“have been achieved on the levels of community perception, behaviours and service delivery, while the outcomes at the national policy remain somehow vague”*, due mainly *“to the little interest, especially in Jordan (...) on the development of the sector in connection with the response to the needs of the Syrian refugee communities”*. It is worth noting that the higher education actions have only included some specific advocacy activities up to date but have not defined any policy objectives yet. Regarding **changes at individual level**, the evaluation highlights positive

changes in behaviours and perceptions towards higher education. It attributes this to the more effective and efficient outreach conducted by implementing partners. The EDU Syria programme has been fundamental in the country to provide higher education scholarships to Syrians and vulnerable Jordanians. A good practice has been identified in the country, *“where a well-known celebrity of Syrian origin, Yahya Hawwa, supported the higher education programme, EDU Syria, through social media at an early stage in 2016. This had a clear impact on the number of applicants.”* Partnerships with other institutions, such as UNHCR and the National Aid Fund (NAF) has also fostered outreach of services. The evaluation also underlines increased interest by Syrian and Jordanian students on specific short vocational training (e.g., coding), due to high demand in the labour market. Regarding access to jobs, a tracer study has been commissioned to assess results from EDU-Syria III. According to the evaluation, Jordanian graduates of the Teacher Education Professional Diploma (TEPD) offered by the QRTA (Queen Rania Teacher Academy) *“emphasised the added value of the scholarship programme to get qualified jobs based on their own experience”*. In a previous tracer study as reported by the outcome evaluation, it was shown that 25% of Syrians who received a scholarship with EUTF support have benefited from a job. However, analysts

affirm this might be higher due to the caution Syrians have when talking about their employment situation. The challenge of finding a job continues to be high due to lack of employment opportunities and the legal ban of Syrian refugees to work in several professions.⁹

On **changes at the level of local organisations and institutions**, the outcome evaluation confirms that partnership with universities has been strengthened and talks about *“profound cooperation mechanisms”*. In Jordan, EDU Syria has encompassed a network of universities under GJU coordination: Queen Rania Teacher Academy, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Yarmouk University, Mutah University, Zarqa University and Luminus Technical University College. The consortium is now, according to the evaluation, *“a trustful partner of the EU, capable of implementing large-scale projects in the refugee context and closely cooperates with the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), UNHCR, NAF and representatives of the business sector”*. Some contacts among EUTF higher education partners resulted in events, such as the one on ‘Creating opportunities through learning - Higher Education in emergencies’, organised by GJU and SPARK. According to the outcome evaluation, this has contributed to establish better networks in the region, and to connect alumni in different countries. The EU

Regional Network of Alumni and Young Professionals has been mentioned as *“a convergence point from the most relevant higher education interventions in the region”* by the outcome evaluation. The Alumni network is now facing the challenge of alumni’s interest and ownership beyond project implementation. It is also worth underlining that the business-acceleration measures planned to promote entrepreneurship among graduates is facing some challenges. The outcome evaluation mentions that it will eventually need to be redesigned towards lighter formats, such as home-based businesses and micro and Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), which is not currently offered by the project.

Changes at national policy or regulatory level, are minimal as, according to the outcome evaluation, there is limited interest from the Government of Jordan in adopting any new higher education policy. Nevertheless, paraphrasing the same source, MoHE shows a high commitment and ownership of the project results. While Jordan subsidises bachelor’s degree studies in public universities to Jordanian citizens, the EUTF has supported master’s degree to vulnerable Jordanians; bachelor’s degree studies to Syrian refugees, and vocational training for both Syrian and vulnerable



→ 12. A new tracer study to assess the results of EDU-Syria III commissioned.



Jordanians. In this context, the outcome evaluation reports, the NAF, *“the main government partner in Jordan dealing with vulnerable host communities, stated that its current operations are being influenced by the learning process of engaging with EDU Syria (GJU led project), and in particular, in implementing the graduation approach with vulnerable Jordanian students, to transition out of poverty and achieve long-term financial stability, supporting their families.”* NAF highlights how, in the case of Jordanians who benefit from a scholarship, 80% get access to jobs and can improve livelihoods.¹⁰

HIGHER EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN IRAQ

EUTF has primarily supported the higher education sector in Iraq through SPARK. Information about **outcomes** resulting from higher education interventions at the **individual level** in Iraq, such as improved self-esteem, access to further education opportunities or job placements, among others, is still very limited. In the second phase of the same action, SPARK has included career orientation, psychosocial support, counselling, and entrepreneurship training to assist students facing wider barriers when enrolling into a higher education journey. A good example is the collaboration with a Syrian student union to undertake outreach activities and support prospective students with the application process. SPARK has also introduced labour market measures, cooperating with NGOs and local

chambers of commerce in Duhok and Erbil to promote job placements. These strategies are leading to positive changes in behaviours towards higher education. However, it is still early to assess the extent of potential outcomes.

At the level of **local institutions and organisations**, such as universities and technical institutes, changes in their collaboration are reported by the implementing partner. Not only are they widening support activities, such as employability training or psychosocial support, but SPARK has also signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate with five partners: three universities (Salahaddin University, Mosul University and Northern Technical University) and two institutes (Ararat Institute, Duhok, and Noble Institute, Erbil). The aim is to provide capacity building, execute infrastructure improvements and provide technical assistance on how to build career development centres. Recently, SPARK has signed two further MoUs with the chambers of commerce in Erbil and Duhok to work on the internships, job placements, and job fair activities, as well as starting talks with both chambers of commerce and industry in Mosul. A collaboration with the university of Baghdad will be also part of the strategic milestones and provide

technical assistance, equipment and capacity strengthening. According to the outcome evaluation, the EU Regional Network of Alumni and Young Professionals is *“a potential point of convergence from the most relevant higher education interventions in the region, which includes the DAAD and SPARK programmes in Iraq”*. The mentioned Network, with EUTF support, recently organised a career opportunities virtual job fair with participation of students and graduates from all countries in the region, Türkiye, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. Some stakeholders interviewed as part of the recent evaluation stated that *“national alumni networks might be more effective and relevant in the future”*.

Very limited **policy work at national or regulatory level** has been incorporated in higher education interventions in Iraq. However, the recent outcome evaluation did highlight a positive approach towards the integration of Syrian students into universities in Iraq. Furthermore, some stakeholders reported that the network of educational partner institutions *“has the potential to become a sustainable association of institutions that work with Syrian refugees, and can contribute, in the future, to policy debates on the education and integration of vulnerable groups”*.

→ 13. In this context, 5 million euros have been secured under Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) to ensure funding of additional scholarships and the continuation of EDU-Syria.