

Action Document for EU Trust Fund to be used for the decisions of the Operational Board**1. IDENTIFICATION**

Title/Number	Increasing access to higher education opportunities for Turkish and Syrian youth and students (Human Resources Development)	
	Facility priority area: EDUCATION	
Total cost	Total estimated cost: €22.352.942 Total amount drawn from the EU Trust Fund: €22.352.942	
Aid method / Method of implementation	Project Approach: Indirect Management UNHCR and Direct Management with Stichting SPARK	
DAC-code	110, 112, 113, 11420	<u>Sectors:</u> Education, Basic Education, Secondary Education, Higher Education

2. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT**2.1. Summary of the action and its objectives**

In line with the "Strategic orientation document for the European Union Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis" (EUTF), the **main objective** of the proposed programme is to cater to displaced persons longer-term resilience, in particular with regard to **education**.

The **specific objective** of this programme is to increase access to inclusive quality primary, secondary and higher education opportunities for Turkish and Syrian young adults.

2.2. Context

Currently, Turkey hosts the world's largest community of Syrians displaced by the ongoing conflict in their country. According to data provided by the DG for Migration Management (DGMM), as of March 2016 Turkey's Syrian Refugee¹ population was more than 2.7 million. While 10% of this population (265,086) reside in camps funded and managed by the Turkish state and nongovernmental actors, a majority (2,150,408) took shelter in towns and cities mostly in the south-eastern provinces.

In Turkey, more than half (54%) of the 2.7 million Syrians are under temporary protection status are children. Based on Ministry of National Education's (MoNE) estimates, in Turkey over 750,000 Syrian children are at the school age of 5-17 years. Many Syrian children have not received any education over the last years and are at risk of becoming a so-called lost generation. According to the Human Rights Watch report of November 2015 the Syrian children interviewed had, on average, lost already two years of schooling. Out-of-school children and youth are at risk of isolation, discrimination and political radicalization. Especially in host communities, children with disabilities also find it hard to access existing education opportunities.

In September 2014, MoNE issued a circular which ensures children under temporary protection in the country can be enrolled in Turkish schools or MoNE certified temporary education centres (TECs). This was followed up by the Temporary Protection Regulation

¹ Since Turkey has not ratified 1967 Protocol of the Geneva Convention of 1954, the Syrian Refugees referred to in this document shall be understood as "Syrian people under temporary protection according to Turkish legislation".

from 22 October 2014 which guarantees legal access to basic education services for the temporary protection beneficiaries. TECs are using adjusted Syrian curriculum where Turkish is a mandatory subject, Arabic as the language of instruction, and Syrian volunteer teachers with oversight by MoNE directors and coordinators.

While around 90 percent of school-aged Syrian children living in camps regularly attend school, the vast majority of Syrian children outside refugee camps in towns and cities show a significantly lower school enrolment rate. According to MoNE, 325,000 Syrian children were registered in schools by mid-February 2016. That implies that 425,000 school-age Syrian children are not receiving education.

In the academic year of 2015-2016, 73,000 Syrian children aged 5-17 are receiving education together with Turkish students in the schools attached to MoNE, the Ministry aims at increasing this number to over 105,000. In this period, 82,000 and 155,000 children are receiving education in TECs in the camps and outside the camps in cities, respectively. Still, the needs and challenges remain immense and complex. Lack of school facilities, economic vulnerability and financial shortcomings, distance from schools, limited teacher capacity, lack of funding for teacher salaries and language problems remain huge barriers to educational participation for Syrians in Turkey.

The Temporary Protection Regulation also makes specific provision for access to higher education by persons under temporary protection, with the Higher Education Council (YOK) being responsible for overseeing these services. The Government of Turkey (GoT) demonstrated its support for access to higher education by Syrian refugees by waiving university tuition fees at state universities for three successive years (2013, 2014 and 2015). This decision has been announced annually by the Council of Ministers and YOK. By the end of 2015, YOK announced that over 10,000 Syrian youth were enrolled in Turkish universities. There is a high demand for access to higher education programmes, as demonstrated by the fact that UNHCR's scholarship programme received 5,803 applications in two weeks.

In spite of these efforts to facilitate access to higher education, many Syrian students are unable to fulfil ambitions of receiving higher education or resume studies that were interrupted by war and displacement. The most significant barriers to higher education participation are economic need and pressure on youth to support their families, lack of proficiency in the language of instruction in Turkish universities, lack of awareness of application procedures and dates and lack of recognition of academic credits obtained in Syria.

2.3. Lessons learnt

- Early investment in systems ensures national ownership and enhances opportunities for Government to explore gaps in terms of policy, national budgeting and capacity that can benefit from financial and technical resources mobilized by the EU and its partners through the emergency to ensure upgrade or sustain critical services, beyond the time-frame of the emergency.
- Although having a smaller absorption capacity than UN agencies, both international and national CSOs have shown proactivity and ability to implement significant projects at a local scale.
- It is very important to distinguish the features of working with urban refugees, as opposed to camp based refugees. Different targeting strategies are required, with: a stronger focus on information campaigns and outreach work; service provision in multiple locations as well as service provision to host and refugee populations; and the development of partnerships with local organisations.

- All responses to the crisis have shown that the situation on the ground develops fast and often beyond projections made. For that reason, a large degree of flexibility will be required for any intervention addressing medium to long term needs to allow for an effective response to the evolving needs of the beneficiary populations.
- Providing access to schools does not ensure that children stay and learn. An understanding of the bottlenecks and barriers to learning are important to ensure learning outcomes.
- Students drop out of higher education programmes and preparatory Turkish academic proficiency programmes due to financial need and inability to meet transportation and basic living costs.
- Assessments indicate that the language barrier is one of the main difficulties encountered by SuTP. An improved knowledge of Turkish facilitates access to education and later to employment and this is also in line with the recommendation from the Hatay conference, organised by YOK, thus the language courses are included under the initiative.
- Offering exam trainings to, together with language trainings, has proved to increase the chances of SuTP in passing the entry exams at universities (YÖS). Providing guidance the applicants to choose for (less popular, but more market relevant) higher TVET scholarships, and choose their study programmes based on the market needs in the domains: Education, Health, Industry, Business and Entrepreneurship, IT, Agriculture and Tourism, with specific occupational has proved beneficiary.
- There is a lack of blended learning options for SuTP. Blended learning could contribute to lowering dropout numbers and retaining students that have additional responsibilities. It could bring better content for programmes and help students to follow the courses in the speed they are able to with customized content, including the required language.
- In past projects on higher education, the emphasis was mostly on providing scholarships while preparing the students for the labour market received minimal attention. Students need to be better prepared for the job market.

2.4. Complementary actions

This action reflects the findings of an independent needs assessment that was commissioned to help guide and target short and medium-term assistance to refugees, which is to be mobilised within the framework of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (June 2016). This assessment builds on the Government of Turkey's first stage needs assessment (March 2016).

This action is complementary to and in synergy with past, current and future actions, which are to be funded under the Facility under various EU mechanisms and instruments. It corresponds to one or more priority areas of the Facility as defined by the Facility Steering Committee on 12 May (Humanitarian Assistance, Migration Management, Education, Health, Municipal Infrastructure and Socio-economic Support). Special care will be taken to avoid overlap with any other EU or third donor funded activity in these areas.

The present action will provide an initial contribution in the priority area of Education, which will be complemented by further interventions under humanitarian and/or non-humanitarian assistance within the framework of the Facility.

Under the EU Trust Fund, further actions in the area of higher education have been contracted or are in preparation. Mid-April 2016 a regional contract was signed with the German Academic Exchange Service DAAD and British Council which will provide higher education scholarships, language courses, education counselling. Furthermore, an action is in

preparation to be implemented by SPARK providing higher education scholarships. The EUD will undertake any efforts to ensure coordination and complementarity of these actions.

The regional EUTF Action 'Access to Higher Education for Syrian Refugees and IDPs to prepare for post-conflict reconstruction of Syria and integration in host communities' implemented by the Dutch NGO SPARK currently provides 511 bachelor scholarships in the Universities of Gaziantep, Harran and Mustafa Kemal (EUR 6 million for Turkey).

The Turkey EUTF Action 'Higher Education for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Disadvantaged Host Communities in Turkey' implemented by the Dutch NGO SPARK offers an additional 385 TOMER language scholarships, and 350 bachelor and TVET scholarships. (EUR 5 million).

The regional EUTF Action 'Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians', implemented by the German organisation DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst) (EUR 2.7 million for Turkey).

The Turkey EUTF Action 'Higher Education Scholarships: Increasing access to higher education for Syrian refugees in Turkey' implemented by UNHCR provides 182 bachelor and 169 master scholarships in universities in Erzurum, Eskisehir, Mersin, Kayseri, Malatya, and Konya among others (EUR 12 million).

The IPA Action 'Supporting the National Institutions in Turkey to Mitigate the Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis' implemented by UNHCR provides 709 scholarships nationwide through the YTB programme Turkey Scholarships Programme (of which EUR 11 million for higher education).

Furthermore, the proposed interventions will also complement a project financed under the 2010 IPA Programme totalling €9.9 million implemented by UNHCR enhancing access to education through increased capacity of institutions and services. The project will also enhance the capacity of MoNE to provide responsive and relevant skills training through Public Education Centres.

2.5. Donor co-ordination

The EU Delegation (EUD) in Ankara is co-chairing with ECHO monthly meetings of the EU Refugees and Migration Coordination contact group with EU Member States.

The EUTF Management is in the lead to ensure coordination with EU Member States contributing to the fund. Moreover, the Fund Management will also coordinate with its selected implementing partners or other stakeholders on regional level or cross border issues.

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 Government of Turkey's response to the Syrian crisis is led and coordinated by the Vice Presidency, while other line ministries and central/local government agencies are increasingly involved in the response. As a result of the protracted nature of the crisis, there is an increasingly strong call for a multi-sector resilience based response.

The Working Group for higher education under the 3RP brings together on a quarterly basis all main actors in the field of higher education, including YTB, YOK, MoNE, UNHCR, DAAD, SPARK, and EUD.

3. DETAILED DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

In line with the "Strategic orientation document for the European Union Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis" (EUTF), the **main objective** of the proposed programme is to cater to displaced persons longer-term development needs, in particular with regard to education.

The **specific objective** of this programme is to increase access to inclusive quality primary, secondary and higher education opportunities for Turkish and Syrian young adults.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

The **expected results** are⁴:

In cooperation with SPARK

- Syrian and Turkish students are provided an integrated pathway to higher education from scholarship provision (350 students under ongoing programmes and 400 new students), to support courses to 500 new students enrolled (TÖMER C1 Turkish language and/or YÖS university preparation courses), specialised student counselling and support to innovative digital learning options;
- Indicatively 300 Syrian and Turkish students complete employability training, of which a 100 will be employed in formal jobs within one year of graduation;

in cooperation with UNHCR

- Indicatively 1,790 Syrian refugee students meet the language proficiency requirements for entry into Turkish universities.
- Indicatively 730 Syrian refugee students remain enrolled in and complete higher education programmes in Turkey.

Main **activities** will be:

In cooperation with SPARK

- Together with YTB, potential scholarship applicants will be selected, and data on existing scholarship students will be shared according to the new regulation on higher education. Retention activities to reduce drop out numbers will be organised for 400 students (summer courses, counselling and career coaching, etc.). In cooperation with YÖK, a selected university will improve its current curricula to offer a blended learning component.
- Provision of a curriculum for employability and entrepreneurship trainings for Turkish and Syrian students, delivery of 20 trainings in entrepreneurship and job search, and the set up of an internships and job placements programme

In cooperation with UNHCR

- Provision of an intensive 10-month university preparation programme for overall 1.500 students that will lead to an advanced certificate in Turkish proficiency (C1 level) and

⁴ There are very few aggregated data on gender composition amongst refugees with regard to education or access to education. The EUD, however, will make sure that the Implementing Partner of the proposed action will report on the results achieved gender specifically in terms of target numbers.

provide supplementary instruction in mathematics and science that will prepare students for university entrance examinations and future study.

- Provision of scholarships to Syrian refugee students enrolled in higher education programmes offered by Turkish universities, who meet academic performance criteria and demonstrate the potential to succeed academically.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Assumptions

- Legal framework guaranteeing access to rights and services for Syrians under temporary protection remains in force.
- Government of Turkey's commitment to providing educational access for Syrians under temporary protection continues and is reflected in regulatory instruments passed by MoNE.
- Government of Turkey continues to waive tuition fees for Syrian students who wish to attend university in Turkey.
- Foreign student quota determined annually by YOK makes sufficient provision for the number of Syrian students seeking access to higher education programmes.
- Students remain enrolled in university and university preparation programmes throughout the duration of these programmes.

Risks	Planned Risk Response
Commitment of GoT for education as priority area not present any longer	UNHCR and SPARK will continuously assess and monitor the policy environment through its regular activities and on-going liaison with key government actors
Key stakeholders, particularly YTB, Vice-Presidency and YOK, do not actively engage in necessary inter-agency and inter-governmental coordination mechanisms	UNHCR and SPARK will continue to play facilitating/ brokering role to ensure necessary engagement with coordination mechanisms.
Government of Turkey introduces tuition fees for Syrian students	UNHCR and SPARK will continuously advocate with the authorities to maintain existing policies and practices
Risk for school drop out especially among girls	To minimize the risk of drop out, students will be able to receive counselling and advice from academic advisors who will be appointed at participating institutions under a complementary Action funded through the Instrument for Pre-Accession. The Implementing partners will carry out advocacy and outreach activities and will report any such cases to the local/national authorities in charge.

Universities have insufficient capacity to significantly scale up provision of language and academic preparation programmes	Mapping of absorptive capacity of institutions ahead of implementation.
Divergences in the opinions and approach of the implementing partners and national/local stakeholders may occur during the implementation of the actions.	The implementing partners will consult and remain in full dialogue with the national/local stakeholders by fully adhering to the principles and values of the international conventions which Turkey is party to.
Incompatibility between study programme selected and labour market needs/employment opportunities	Study subjects are selected based on the labour market analyses. All students will get an entrepreneurship and/or employability skills training. Apart from trainings, SPARK will organize job placements and internships in companies. Moreover, mentorship and coaching for access to finance will be organized for start-ups.

3.4. Cross-cutting issues

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.

Gender: throughout the project design and implementation gender mainstreaming will be taken into consideration throughout the project. This includes staff involved in the project, targeted population etc. Female students will be specifically targeted and encouraged to apply. Where possible female students will be accommodated in programmes delivered in their cities of residence (as some families refuse participation if their daughters have to travel long distances or reside apart from their families and male relatives). Students' vulnerability will be considered and priority will be given to students who are disabled. The aim is that at least 50 per cent of scholarship recipients will be women.

The action will also align with the thematic objectives of the Turkey Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, to be pursued in all the EU actions in the country from now until 2020.

Disability: the proposed Implementing Partners for this action will make efforts to mainstream youth with disabilities into education programmes. Since youth with disabilities may be more prevalent among economically inactive and marginalized youth, the implementing partners will strive to include them in entrepreneurship capacity building as well as in youth consultations.

Special attention will be paid to ensuring the inclusion of youth with disabilities under all the aims and activities of the action, in view of the high risk of their under-participation and social exclusion. Environmental and social barriers to the participation of these children and youth will be identified and addressed. Training activities and community outreach and campaigns will be planned.

3.5. Stakeholders

Implementation of activities will be undertaken in collaboration with national and provincial authorities specifically YTB, YOK, Vice Presidency, MoNE, local universities and relevant partners in specific technical areas.

UNHCR and SPARK will implement activities in close collaboration with YTB. UNHCR has entered into a partnership agreement with YTB to implement UNHCR's flagship scholarship

programme, the DAFI (Albert Einstein Refugee Academic Initiative) programme. YTB is responsible for the management of the Government of Turkey's *Turkiye Burslari* programme and has extensive experience in the management of scholarship programmes and has, since 2013, been managing and overseeing programmes to provide advanced Turkish language programmes to Syrian refugees. As of 2015, UNHCR began funding this programme when it was expanded to refugees residing outside of camps. YTB, through an exchange of letters with UNHCR Representation, has reiterated its commitment to collaborating with UNHCR in the implementation of higher education access programmes for refugees. UNHCR also works closely with MoNE and is a member of the Education Working Group established by MoNE. UNHCR has established relations with YOK which has the statutory responsibility, under the Temporary Protection Regulation, for the oversight of higher education access for Syrians in Turkey.

The content of the revised action has been shared with the Vice Presidency on 1 October 2018 and received a positive feedback. Moreover, the choice of the Implementing Partner was agreed.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Financing agreement, if relevant

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with Turkey, 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 66 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

Indirect management UNHCR and Direct Management with SPARK

To be able to respond to immediate needs in the context of the Syrian crisis for interventions for Syrian refugees and their host communities in Turkey in accordance with the above objectives, two delegation agreements are foreseen in accordance with Article 58(1)(c) of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012.

Eligible implementing partners were selected on the basis of their experience in the field, and possibility to scale up their existing operations and/or introducing new activities within their portfolio. Furthermore, proven experience in cooperating with the GoT and having obtained an agreement of GoT on the planned intervention were decisive factors for selecting an implementing partner. As such the selection of these entities is justified by their unique market position to absorb considerable aid funds in a short period but maintaining the required accountability standards at the same time.

4.4. Indicative budget

Indicative budget*	Amount in EUR
Direct management with SPARK	10.000.000
Indirect management with UNHCR	12.352.942
Total	22.352.942

* *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).*

The funds for implementing this action stem from IPA funds transferred to the EUTF by the end of 2015 (Ex IPA Human Resources Development Operational Programme) as they were in danger of being de-committed. The eligible expenditure under this action shall be the total of the decisions on the allocation of funds to individual actions taken by the EUTF before 30 September 2018 in pursuing the objectives set out in the revised Human Resources Development Operational Programme.

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.

With regard to the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (Facility) and EUTF Syria, the implementing partners will comply with the monitoring and evaluation requirements of the Facility. They will report quarterly on agreed Facility Results Framework indicators. This reporting requirement comes in addition to the obligations that partners have as part of their

reporting against log frames. Each partner will only be required to be reporting on those indicators that directly correspond to their projects.

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.

Although Turkey is one of the beneficiary countries of the EUTF Syria, communication activities inside Turkey in relation to EU Trust projects are carried out within the framework of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (Facility). While the above-mentioned key objectives and essence of the communication and visibility campaigns apply, the guidelines agreed between the Facility and the Turkish authorities need to be respected. Upon launch of the project, the EU Trust Fund Communication and Outreach Lead will refer the implementing partner to the Communications Lead for the Facility at the EU Delegation in Ankara for the Turkey component of the programme.