

FOLLOW-UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STRATEGIC MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE EU REGIONAL TRUST FUND IN RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS (2014-2018)

Recommendations, Final report	Responses, DG NEAR: (i) accepted or not, ii) actions to be undertaken	Follow up Comments (by who and by when)
5.1 Extension		
<p>Key conclusion: The protracted crisis is expected to continue evidenced by limited fluctuations in the number of arrivals and departures of Syrian refugees in host countries. It is not likely that host country and EU policies will change substantially in order to provide a framework that could respond to the needs of beneficiaries. It is also unlikely that other funding instruments could adequately fill the gap if the EUTF ceased its operations. Most of the assumptions presented during the set-up of the EUTF have held, and the raison d'être for the EUTF remains broadly justified. In addition, the EUTF has generally performed satisfactorily across the criteria assessed by the evaluation, and the EUTF has clearly generated added value, compared to the efforts that EU Member States could have undertaken themselves.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 1: The evaluation team recommends that EUTF is extended beyond December 2019 to allow stakeholders to continue to respond to beneficiaries' and host countries' needs as the protracted crisis continues. Action: EUTF, Trust Fund Board.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees to the recommendation on extension and will proceed with the proposal to extend the Trust Fund beyond its current end date of December 2019.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The TF Manager presented the extension proposal to the Board in December 2018, along with a report justifying the extension and confirming that the establishment requirements set in Art. 234(3) of the 2018 Financial Regulations are met. - Thereafter, given the Board's approval of the extension proposal, the Commission will consult the European Parliament and the Council. - Finally, the extension of the EUTF is to be authorized by the College and adopted as a Commission decision modifying the constitutive agreement. 	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>NEAR B1/EUTF</p> <p>ISC launched on 14 March 2019. Consultation with EP and Council planned.</p> <p>DDL: October 2019.</p>
5.2 REFRESH		
<p>Key conclusion: The evaluation found strong evidence that the EUTF team is under-staffed in view of increasing responsibilities and portfolios, particularly at EUD level. The evaluation further found that it is challenging for EUTF staff, particularly at EUD level, to hold different responsibilities at the same time, including identification negotiations with host country stakeholders, in-country coordination of EUTF, policy dialogue at overarching level on crisis response, sector-specific policy dialogue, management of relations with implementation partners, follow-up of implementation, communications, and monitoring and evaluation responsibilities.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 2: Improve governance and implementation</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p>	<p>Follow-up</p>

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<p>issues. Action: EUTF, Trust Fund Operational Board, EC.</p>	<p>DG NEAR partially accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>The overall governance structure of the Trust Fund is set in the Constitutive Agreement (<i>inter alia</i> accountability, supervision and decision making procedures).</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendations accepted by the Commission and the Trust Fund Board will be implemented. 	<p>NEAR B1/EUTF/TF Board/EUD</p> <p>An informal meeting for the members of the Operational Board to discuss the recommendations of the MTR was organised on 9 November 2019.</p> <p>The Trust Fund Manager's conclusions from the MTR was presented in his report to the Trust Fund Board on 14 December 2018.</p> <p>DDL: December 2019.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Given that overheads are lower than what is allowed for EU Trust Funds, the evaluation team recommends that a functional review is conducted to assess staffing needs and staffing is increased to match the administrative and management requirements of the EUTF portfolio both at HQ level and in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq by February 2019. Action: EC, EUTF.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR fully agrees that a review of the staffing needs would be useful. This review would also assess budget availability to ensure staffing until the end of the mandate, as well as the possibility to create new posts as per Commission rules and regulations.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The TF Manager will undertake a staff review. - The TF Manager will establish budget availability for the creation of new posts. - Where needs and budget availability match, the Commission will be requested to create new posts. - A new organigram will be presented. - Vacancies for any new posts will be launched. 	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>NEAR B1/EUTF together with EUD and NEAR R1.</p> <p>A staff review and budget review availability were undertaken in 2018, in line with EU Commission Standards on staffing.</p> <p>Three new project management positions have been created and filled for Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon.</p> <p>Workflow processes regarding staffing responsibilities have been clarified.</p> <p>A further staff and budget review will take place in Q2 2019.</p> <p>An updated organigram will be finalised by Q2 2019.</p> <p>DDL: updated organigram by Q2 2019.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: The evaluation team further recommends that staff recruitment processes are streamlined to allow for</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>NEAR B1/EUTF together with EUD and NEAR</p>

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<p>quicker recruitment, including consideration of setting up a cadre of experts that can be deployed within two weeks, and particularly for roles that have been identified as being vulnerable to workload pressure in the functional review. Action: EC, EUTF.</p>	<p>DG NEAR partially accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that a review of the staffing situation is needed, but does not agree that short-term experts could be the solution. The nature of the work, programme coordination, and quality of the EUTF's work requires long-term sustainability of the team in place and cannot be ensured through ad hoc deployment of experts.</p> <p>The staff regulations of the Commission are applicable to EU Trust Funds, which include recruitment processes. These cannot be adjusted specifically for the EUTF. Instead, the TF Manager shall act on staff needs in line with recommendation 3.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>Same as recommendation 3. A new organigram will be presented</p>	<p>R1.</p> <p>See comments under recommendation 3</p> <p>DDL: updated organigram by Q2 2019</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: The evaluation team recommends that, in order to increase efficiency, staff responsibilities are differentiated to allow focus on discrete aspects of programme cycles, geographic locations and/or sector responsibilities as deemed appropriate following the functional review. These changes should take place within three months of these recommendations. Action: EUTF Management.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendations.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>While doing the 2019 staff review (see recommendation 3), the TF Manager will also assess how to increase efficiencies linked to division of tasks and staff responsibilities.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>Same as recommendation 3. A new organigram will be presented.</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>NEAR B1/EUTF together with EUD and NEAR R1.</p> <p>See comments under recommendation 3</p> <p>DDL: updated organigram by Q2 2019</p>
<p>Key conclusion: The centralisation of decision-making, especially on contracting and on negotiations with implementing partners, can sometimes slow down processes and decrease EUD ownership.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 6: The evaluation team recommends that decision-making is further decentralised to EUD level so that EUTF staff based in EUDs can directly negotiate programme changes with implementation partners within a budget threshold of 25% of the overall contract value. Action: EUTF Management.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR rejects the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>The programme officers in EUD are already responsible for negotiation and dialogue with implementing partners within their programme portfolios and</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>N/A</p>

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	<p>are directly responsible to negotiation changes with implementing project partners within a budget threshold of 20% of the overall contract value to be endorsed by the authorising officer (AOSD).</p> <p>The rules and regulations of the Commission apply to EU Trust Funds. These stipulate that financial and contractual responsibilities remain with the Authorising Officer (AOSD) and that delegation of respective authority to Contract Agents is not authorised.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>N/A</p>	
<p>Recommendation 7: The evaluation team also recommends that coordination is increased between EUDs and the EUTF to assess and respond to human resource needs on an ongoing basis in response to the requirements of the EUTF portfolio and EUD staff workloads. Action: EUTF, EUDs</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR has already put in place a flexible use of staff resources to allow for longer missions to EUD (3 months) to increase capacities during peaks in workload. There is also a flexibility between HQ and EUD through shifting portfolios (or part of) when needed. In December 2018, a decision was taken to further clarify and integrate colleagues working in EUDs on EUTF credits with the work of the EUDs.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>Recommendation implemented.</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>NEAR B1/EUTF together with EUD</p> <p>Two core staff three month missions were deployed to Jordan and Lebanon in order to structure and align operations management with HQ and provide substantive support in addressing a peak workload.</p> <p>Recommendation implemented.</p>
<p><i>Key conclusion: EUTF stakeholders hold a range of perceptions about project identification and selection, which would benefit from ensuring continuing communication and clarification. The evaluation also found varying levels of awareness and knowledge among Trust Fund and Operational Board members about the work of EUTF, despite EUTF ongoing efforts to provide information and reporting during Board meetings.</i></p>		
<p>Recommendation 8: The evaluation team recommends that the detailed, justified selection choices and project pipeline continue to be presented at Operational Board meetings; and that the EUTF team also presents monitoring data from interventions to share insights on best practices, lessons learned, challenges and results. This action should be undertaken at every Operational Board meeting. Action: EUTF, Operational Board.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>The EUTF presents already the project pipeline to the Board Members for feedback and comment prior to definition of the pipeline by NEAR B1/EUTF and the EUD. The justification of the selection of an action is presented to the Operational Board at the time when the Trust Fund team presents the action</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>NEAR B1/EUTF together with EUD</p> <p>Recommendation implemented.</p> <p>The evaluation reports on higher education and livelihoods to be shared by Q2 2019.</p>

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	<p>for approval.</p> <p>The EUTF has produced quarterly monitoring reports, which have been shared with Board members at the Board meetings. The mid-term evaluation report has been shared with Board members and the evaluation reports on higher education and Livelihoods are planned to be shared by Q2 2019 with Board members.</p> <p>The EUTF is already working as per recommendation and will continue keeping the Operational Board informed. The new website of the EUTF will allow for more information to be posted online, including approved actions (which presents rationale around selected programmes) and generated results.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken Recommendation implemented.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 9: The evaluation team recommends that MS keep clear lines of communication with their development agencies on an ongoing basis to ensure that information on project pipelines, selection and identification are conveyed as appropriate. Action: MS</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the EU member states, but DG NEAR supports it and will contribute to its implementation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees and adds that it is important that the EU MS keep national implementing partners aware of the work of the EUTF. The EUTF contributes to this by offering briefings to interested stakeholders at capital level as well as to the Practitioners' Network in Brussels so based on the pipeline presented at Board meetings.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>MS to take action, EUTF will continue to pursue pro-active information sharing on the EUTF pipeline and justification on project selection.</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>NEAR B1/EUTF together with EUD, EU MS and implementing partners.</p> <p>Recommendation implemented.</p>
<p><i>Key conclusion: Overall, the multi-partner, multi-sectoral implementation model is working well, but the evaluation identified concerns relating to the multi-country/regional dimension of projects.</i></p>		
<p>Recommendation 10: The evaluation team recommends that the EUTF continues to ensure that multi-country programmes are tailored to each implementation country. Action: EUTF, Operational Board.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>NEAR B1/EUTF together with EUD</p> <p>Recommendation implemented. Overall, a policy</p>

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	<p>The EUTF is already working on implementing the recommendation and will continue to ensure that each programme is relevant and tailored to its specific context, including the specific country situation.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>Recommendation implemented.</p>	<p>shift has taken place from multi-country to bilateral programming. Only in clearly justified cases is multi-country programming pursued.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11: The evaluation team further recommends that all concept notes detail in a comparative and comprehensive manner how the project will take into account each host government's capacity and the needs of the beneficiaries, including conflict sensitivity. Action: EUTF, Operational Board.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that it is of utmost importance that all applicants for funding clearly demonstrate that these aspects have been assessed and how the proposed action will address them, safeguarding the key mandate of the Trust Fund in bridging the humanitarian development nexus.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>The Trust Fund Manager will ensure that all Concept Notes submitted by interested implementing partners are assessed accordingly and results will be communicated respective applicants.</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>EUTF</p> <p>Recommendation has been implemented with immediate effect.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12: The evaluation team also recommends that the regional aspect of each project is limited to knowledge sharing, lesson learning and advocacy and that this expectation is clearly communicated to the implementing partners by the next Operational Board meeting and on an ongoing basis where appropriate. Action: EUTF, Operational Board.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that these aspects are the added value of regional components of multi-country programmes.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>The EUTF will reflect on how to best integrate this into its daily work, may it be to revise so that the selection criteria address these issues or as part of the negotiation process of an action.</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>EUTF</p> <p>DDL: 10th Operational Board 2019.</p>
<p>Key conclusion: Beneficiary needs are recognised across all EUTF countries, although the greatest needs relative to the country context are in Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 13: Assuming no major changes in the patterns of displacement from the Syria crisis, the evaluation</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p>	<p>Follow-up</p>

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<p>team recommends that the EUTF focuses on Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan for the next phase of the EUTF. Action: Trust Fund Board, EUTF.</p>	<p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees <i>in principle</i> that the focus for future response should be on Jordan, and Lebanon. Though as per the amended constitutive agreement, the EUTF has proven to be a critical instrument in addressing critical needs in a timely manner compared to other instruments within DG Near in line with its mandate in bridging the humanitarian development nexus. As regards Iraq, EUTF action shall continue to be considered where such action has clear value added over other (DCI, notably) interventions.</p> <p>This flexibility to adjust to adequately respond to needs where needs may be is an intrinsic feature of the EUTF's mandate and had been recognised by the MTE as an added value of the EUTF. This flexibility shall remain.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>This recommendation has been reflected in the TF Manager's report to the Board and discussed with the members of the Board. It had been agreed to leave the scope of the TF open in the constitutive agreement to be adopted for extension, while maintaining key focus on Jordan and Lebanon based on the justified caseload of Syrian Refugees and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey instrument in place.</p>	<p>TF Manager</p> <p>DDL: December 2019.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14: The evaluation team recommends that the Fund phases out in Turkey before the renewal of EUTF comes into place as most funding there has been from the Turkey Facility and ex-IPA. Action: Trust Fund Board, EUTF.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>The needs of Syrian refugees and their host communities in Turkey is addressed by the Facility for Refugees in Turkey and it is currently not foreseen that the EUTF will propose new actions for Turkey to its Operational Board.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>Same as recommendation 13.</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>TF Manager</p> <p>No new Actions for Turkey have been adopted, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey will take over.</p> <p>DDL: January 2019.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15: The evaluation team recommends that the Fund phases out in Serbia before the renewal of EUTF comes into place given shifting needs in country. Action: Trust</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR accepts the recommendation.</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>TF Manager</p>

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Fund Board, EUTF.	<p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>The caseload on the refugee situation in Serbia has significantly reduced in the past two years. In line with the IPA capacity building programmes on chapters 23 and 24 of the EU acquis, the IPA instrument will take over EUTF programmes. The EUTF has proven its justification in bridging the humanitarian development nexus.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>Same as recommendation 13.</p>	<p>No new Actions for Serbia will be adopted; the IPA instrument will take over from EUTF operations.</p> <p>DDL: July 2019.</p>
Key conclusion: Gender responsiveness is evident in programming as well as in reporting requirements but varies depending on context and capacity.		
<p>Recommendation 16: The evaluation team recommends that EUTF continues to monitor its programming for gender responsiveness and ensures corrective measures are taken where implementation proves challenging. Action: EUTF.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>DG NEAR partially accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>The EUTF recognises the specific needs of women and girls affected by the Syrian crisis and ensures full compliance in programmatic mainstreaming with the provision of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security, and to the role of women in all its measures.</p> <p>Currently, the EUTF does not have resources or competencies to address gender as a distinct element in its programmes. The staff review (see recommendation 3) should include a reflection whether this shall be a priority to include for the future.</p> <p>As a results-oriented actor, the EUTF should ensure that its results framework and M&E mechanisms are adequately taking gender issues into consideration and to report accordingly.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revise EUTF Results Framework to include gender disaggregated data and specific gender actions. - Staff review should reflect on gender competencies. 	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>TF Manager</p> <p>DDL:</p> <p>Staff review by Q2 2019.</p> <p>An Action Document M&E includes a provision for an evaluation on gender to be adopted by the Operational Board in Q2 2019.</p> <p>RFW by March 2019.</p>
<p>Recommendation 17: The evaluation team recommends the appointment of a EUTF gender focal point to support</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p>	<p>Follow-up</p>

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<p>implementing partners in adapting and implementing gender responsive programming, as agreed in their Action documents. The focal point should be appointed within three months of these recommendations. Action: EUTF.</p>	<p>DG NEAR partially accepts the recommendation.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>The EUTF recognises the specific needs of women and girls affected by the Syrian crisis and ensures full compliance in programmatic mainstreaming with the provision of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security, and to the role of women in all its measures.</p> <p>Currently, the EUTF does not have resources or competencies to address gender as a distinct element in its programmes. The staff review (see recommendation 3) should include a reflection whether this shall be a priority to include for the future.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff review should reflect on gender competencies. 	<p>TF Manager</p> <p>DDL:</p> <p>Staff review by Q2 2019.</p>
<p>Key conclusion: The EUTF undeniably generates added value compared to the efforts EU Member States could have undertaken themselves.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 18: The evaluation team recommends that EU Member States demonstrably increase their contributions, thereby allowing the Fund to deliver greater leverage while also allowing it to increase its administrative spending, which would resolve several efficiency hindrances. Action: MS.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the EU MS.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>DG NEAR agrees that the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis is a joint endeavour; the justification for establishing Trust Funds includes their additionality, such as generating additional contributions from member states.</p> <p>ii) Actions to be undertaken</p> <p>N/A to the Commission</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Recommendation 19: The evaluation team recommends that EU Member States agree on a percentage return to be re-invested in EUTF relative to their national agency and NGO incomes from EUTF. This increase should be announced in advance of the extension of the EUTF in December 2019. Action: MS.</p>	<p>i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected</p> <p>This recommendation is addressed to the EU MS, but DG NEAR rejects it.</p> <p>Comments (why accepted/rejected)</p> <p>Contributions to the Trust Fund should not be bound to the ‘return investment’, but based on a common EU commitment to respond to the Syrian crisis and the assessment of the added value and results of the Trust</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>Comments (by who and by when)</p> <p>N/A</p>

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	Fund. ii) Actions to be undertaken N/A	
<i>Key conclusion: As the crisis in Syria continues, operations in the country are not envisaged until a political settlement is underway. Now, however, is the appropriate time to consider future options.</i>		
Recommendation 20: The evaluation team recommends that an early assessment is carried out of beneficiary needs in the country to determine whether the governance and set-up of the EUTF would be adequate and suitable for the Syria context. This assessment should be carried out by March 2019. Action: EUTF, Trust Fund Board, EU.	i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected DG NEAR rejects the recommendations. Comments (why accepted/rejected) Beneficiary needs inside Syria are considered by EU assessments funded by ENI and in line with the Humanitarian Response Plan, working closely with UN agencies and civil society. EU non-humanitarian interventions are guided by EU policy of Council Conclusions of April 2018. ii) Actions to be undertaken N/A	Follow-up N/A
Recommendation 21: The evaluation team also recommends that the EUTF gives due consideration to the consequences that shifting support to Syria would have on neighbouring host countries and identifies what instruments would be available to continue to address beneficiary needs there in the event of decreased EUTF support. This identification process should be ongoing. Action: EUTF, Trust Fund Board, EU.	i) Accepted/ Partially accepted/Rejected DG NEAR rejects the recommendations. Comments (why accepted/rejected) The EUTF is an instrument to implement the EU response to the Syrian crisis across the region. The identification of available and adequate instruments to work inside Syria cannot be done by the EUTF ii) Actions to be undertaken N/A	Follow-up Comments (by who and by when) N/A