

## **EN**

### **ANNEX**

#### **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe Exceptional Assistance Measure regarding Syria**

##### **1. IDENTIFICATION**

Action: Support to peace and stabilisation efforts in Syria

Action Reference: NDICI CR 2024 / 33; ACT-62946

Cost: EUR 4 000 000 (European Union (EU) contribution).

Budget Line: 14 02 03 10

Duration: Maximum 18 months. The authorising officer responsible may decide to extend this period twice by a further period of up to six months, up to a total maximum duration of 30 months, under the conditions laid down in Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.  
Maximum 18 months

Lead service: FPI

##### **2. ACTION SUMMARY**

Thirteen years after the start of the conflict, Syria continues to be plagued by protracted and overlapping crises at humanitarian and political levels. While the prospects for a peaceful solution outlined in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 of 2015 (UNSCR 2254) are weakened by the stalled peace talks in Geneva, the EU remains committed to preserve this resolution as a reference point, considering an inclusive political transition process as the only viable path towards lasting peace and reconciliation. This 18-month measure complements the EU financial and political support to the ongoing EU Syria Peace Initiative (SPI) – co-funded by the EU, Germany and Denmark. Currently in its fifth phase, it remains a unique tool to respond in a flexible manner to new political developments integrating multiple initiatives linked to UNSCR 2254 into a coherent programme. This measure will build on achievements under past iterations implemented by the *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2023) 6710

### **3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

#### **3.1 BACKGROUND**

The Syrian war, now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year, continues to have a devastating impact on the region, with around 5.5 million registered refugees in neighbouring countries and 7.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Humanitarian needs have reached an all-time high, with 16.7 million Syrians depending on humanitarian aid as of March 2024. The difficult situation has been exacerbated by the current spill-over of the Israel-Gaza conflict into Lebanon and the rest of the Middle East region. As of 12 November 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 510 000 people had crossed from Lebanon into Syria (71% Syrians, 27% Lebanese nationals, and 2% third country nationals). The majority of those crossing into Syria are women and children. There have also been attacks linked to Iran-backed groups operating in Syria, which have exposed the Syrian population. In retaliation, Israeli air strikes have repeatedly targeted Iranian proxies and regime forces in the South of Syria and in the proximity of Damascus on several occasions (notably the Iranian consulate in Damascus in April and other attacks in the week of 04 October 2024). The Assad regime cannot afford militarily or economically to be dragged into a war with Israel, hence its low profile amidst the regional tensions.

On the diplomatic front, reconciliation efforts with the Arab States and Türkiye have so far not changed the regime's approach to the peace process, confirming the deadlock on the political process and the holding of the Constitutional Committees.

Despite this situation, and in line with UNSCR 2254 as well as the European Union's strategy on Syria, the Syria Peace Initiative (SPI), co-funded by the EU, Germany and Denmark, has continued to provide a flexible instrument and a rapid response to promote a UN-led peace process to end the conflict in Syria. The EU reiterates that the only path to a sustainable peace for Syria is a political solution in line with UNSCR 2254 that will require the engagement of all parties involved in the conflict in credible negotiations for a peaceful and democratic transition in Syria and in order to sustain a high level of international attention on Syria.

Currently in its fifth phase, SPI has continued to support the outreach activities of the Syrian Negotiation Committee based in Geneva in the expectation of resuming political negotiations. It has also been instrumental in supporting Syrian civil society's efforts to build Syrian-led bridges across geographical and political divides, with the ultimate objective to promote local and national peace, and to keep the attention on Syria high on the political agenda of the international community through the active participation in events, including at the annual Brussels Conferences on "Supporting the future of Syria and the region".

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

Thirteen years after the start of the conflict in Syria, the prospects for a peaceful solution outlined in UNSCR 2254 are weakened by the stalled peace talks in Geneva with continued devastating humanitarian, political, economic and social impacts on Syria and the Middle East

region, constituting an exceptional and unforeseen situation in the sense of Article 4(4) (a) of the NDICI Regulation. An adequate response cannot be provided under any other European Union Instrument due to the urgency with which the funds are required and due to available resources already being firmly committed.

Annex IV, paragraph 1, second paragraph, points (a) and (b) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 specifically provides for the use of the NDICI rapid response pillar to support, (a) through the provision of technical and logistical assistance, the efforts undertaken by international, regional and local organisations and by State and civil society actors in promoting confidence building, mediation, dialogue and reconciliation, transitional justice, women's and youth' empowerment, in particular with regard to community tensions and protracted conflicts, and (b) the implementation of UNSCRs on women, youth, peace and security.

### 3.3 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In light of the most recent geopolitical dynamics, the action builds also on the assumption that the geopolitical events do not fundamentally alter the political trajectory of the Syrian crisis.

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Risk level (high, medium, low)</b>	<b>Mitigation measures</b>
Security risks for projects implemented inside Syria.	Medium	The security situation will be closely monitored. In case of security concerns, implementing partners will take the needed precautionary measures based on pre-defined standard operating procedures.
Political risk: changing political developments may impact the management and implementation of the activities and target locations, including access restrictions.	Medium	The Action will be subject to regular risk analyses and monitoring. Activities are to be conducted as per guidelines set out in the EU strategy for Syria. These will be suspended if the political situation does not allow implementation of the Action with the planned stakeholders. A vetting process of local partners will allow the sufficient level of political neutrality.
Operational risk: lack of coordination among donors resulting in duplication of efforts or inefficient allocation of resources.	Low	The measure has been designed in close coordination with other funding streams within and beyond the EU. Close coordination with relevant EU services and other stakeholders will be ensured throughout the project implementation period.

## **4. OBJECTIVES**

### **4.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE**

The overall objective of the action is to provide an effective multi-layered, multi-stakeholder contribution to the Syria peace process in line with UNSCR 2254 and the EU strategy for Syria.

### **4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- 4.2.1 Support the political process and relevant opposition actors, enabling them to negotiate effectively and to leverage their position in the peace process;
- 4.2.2 Ensure the peace process is more inclusive and strengthened by peacebuilding efforts of civil society actors at all levels; and
- 4.2.3 Ensure access to information as well as context and conflict-sensitive analysis on Syrian and regional developments for the political steering of the initiative.

## **5. ACTION COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS**

The foreseen activities may be refined over time based on updated need assessments, in close consultation with the EU Delegation to Syria, other Commission services, and other likeminded actors.

**The main expected results/outcomes include:**

**Expected Result (1):** The technical and operational capabilities of the opposition (Syria Negotiation Commission - SNC and related groups) are strengthened.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.1.1 Provide political, strategic and technical support to the SNC leadership;
- 5.1.2 Provide financial and organisational support for the SNC Office in Geneva; and
- 5.1.3 Provide support to the SNC's advocacy efforts through the organisation of events, to their technical committees, and to their communication and media team.

**Expected Result (2):** The legitimacy of the opposition (SNC and related groups) is reinforced.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.2.1 Provide technical and strategic advice to the SNC;
- 5.2.2 Organise consultations with relevant target groups (e.g. women, youth, or the business sector) to strengthen the SNC's outreach to its Syrian constituency; and
- 5.2.3 Support consensus-building measures within the Syrian opposition on the content of the peace negotiations.

**Expected Result (3):** The UN Office of the Special Envoy to Syria (OSE) is supported to render the political process accessible, inclusive, and consultative.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.3.1 Provide technical support to the opposition-leaning and neutral members of the Constitutional Committee, if the Constitutional Committee meetings are resumed;

- 5.3.2 Provide financial support to the OSE-facilitated Civil Society Support Room (CSSR) as the civil society arm of the UN Office of the Special Envoy to Syria, such as in-person consultation meetings, CSSR participation in Brussels Syria conference, regional and international outreach missions, virtual outreach activities, and maintenance of media and website presence; and
- 5.3.3 Establish a mechanism for continued exchanges and cooperation between SPI and the OSE as well as channels to share SPI research products.

**Expected Result (4):** Contributions to an enabling environment for further negotiations are provided.

- 5.4.1 Establish formal, semi-formal and ad-hoc mechanisms for identifying confidence-building measures to contribute to unlocking the current deadlock in the political process;
- 5.4.2 Enable Track 1.5 initiatives;
- 5.4.3 Provide safe spaces for dialogue; and
- 5.4.4 Ensure the participation and/or contribution to international diplomacy events relevant for the Syrian political process.

**Expected Result (5):** Civil society actors are enabled to provide relevant input to opposition and other Track 1 actors.

- 5.5.1 Support SPI partners to organise dialogue forums on relevant and timely topics;
- 5.5.2 Facilitate exchanges between civil society representatives and Track 1 actors; and
- 5.5.3 Organise relevant civil society events.

**Expected Result (6):** Dialogue space for confidence building, trust, and inclusivity of different civil society components is created.

- 5.6.1 Continuously update and maintain a map of all ongoing peace process support initiatives;
- 5.6.2 Actively promote the sharing of information with the SNC;
- 5.6.3 Maintain coherence in Track 2 and 3 projects through close coordination with project implementers;
- 5.6.4 Actively connect different partners involved in the peace process;
- 5.6.5 Identify potential synergies between different initiatives; and
- 5.6.6 Support civil society actors to foster dialogue with underrepresented groups, including women, youth, displaced persons.

**Expected Result (7):** Relevant and tailored research and analyses of the Syrian context are available for SPI and relevant stakeholders.

- 5.7.1 Support inter-communal and civil society dialogues;
- 5.7.2 Disseminate relevant information to policymakers and partners; and
- 5.7.3 Respond to ad hoc enquiries from the political arena;

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION

### 6.1 IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

The Commission will ensure that the appropriate EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures<sup>2</sup>.

#### 6.1.1 Indirect management with a pillar assessed entity

This action may be implemented in indirect management by *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ). This implementation entails support to a negotiated political transition in Syria, through strengthened dialogue, mediation and peacebuilding initiatives between Syrian conflict parties, contributing to achieving the objectives outlined in sections 4 and 5. The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: strong credentials as an EU Member State development Agency working in supporting the peace process; established presence and network in Beirut, Istanbul and Geneva; successful management of the previous four phases of the present Syria Peace Initiative (see section 3.1 Background).

### 6.2 INDICATIVE BUDGET

The total European Union contribution under this Financing Decision **will not exceed EUR 4 000 000**. A breakdown among components is provided hereunder, and is indicative.

#### Indicative budget breakdown

Components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified
Support to the Syria Peace Initiative (SPI)		
6.1.1. – Indirect management with GIZ	4 000 000	N/A
Total	4 000 000	N/A

### 6.3 ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The action shall be implemented under indirect management. It will be managed by the Commission, with the support of the European Union Delegation to Syria for the monitoring of the action.

### 6.4 PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the

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<sup>2</sup> [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu) Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website, it is the OJ version that prevails.

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

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

## **6.5 EVALUATION**

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

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

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

## **6.6 AUDIT**

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

## **6.7 COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY**

The 2021-2027 programming cycle adopted a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

In line with the 2022 “[Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for External Actions](#)”, it will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union’s support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

## **7. COMPLEMENTARITY, COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

The European Union strategy for Syria aims at supporting a political transition in Syria and put an end to the conflict. The overall coordination on this action will be ensured through regular exchanges between the EU Delegation to Syria, other EU Services and EU Member States, especially Germany and Denmark that are contributing to this action.

Given the political nature of the action, and the numerous non-governmental organisations involved, close monitoring and coordination will continue to be ensured through the existing information mechanism that include a coordination group and a steering committee that oversees the initiative. In this context, systematic exchanges of information and consultations will continue to take place between the implementing partner and the EU.