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والشؤون الدولية

# A THREE-DIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON EU POLICY TOWARDS LEBANON



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ANALYSIS

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of the European Union (EU) Delegation in Lebanon in 1979 and the signing of the Association Agreement between the European Delegation and Lebanon in 2006,<sup>1</sup> both sides have closely cooperated on political, economic, and security matters. With the development of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in 2004 and its renewal in 2015, the EU has consolidated a wide international policy through developing bilateral actions with partner countries. The ENP aims at fostering stability, security, and prosperity in the neighboring region of the EU, both in the South and East.<sup>2</sup> As such, the EU partnership with Lebanon is integrated into the EU's policy in the Southern Neighborhood. In the renewed agenda of 2021 for Partnership with the Southern Neighborhood, the EU reaffirmed its willingness to cooperate with the Southern Mediterranean region in governance, socio-economic, security, and environmental issues.<sup>3</sup> Particularly for Lebanon, the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for 2021-2027 underlined the priorities for cooperation with the EU, focusing on "good governance and supporting reforms, strengthening an inclusive and resilient economy, and promoting a green and sustainable recovery."<sup>4</sup>

In May 2024, the EU reaffirmed its support to Lebanon with the EU's President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announcing a EUR 1 billion package to be disbursed between 2024 and 2027.<sup>5</sup> According to the announcement made in Beirut, the financial assistance should be implemented toward strengthening Lebanese basic services, such as education, social protection, and health to help both Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees. The EU also reaffirmed its willingness to support the adoption of urgent economic, financial, and banking reforms through this aid, as set out by the International Monetary Fund in the 2022 Staff Level Agreement with Lebanon. Moreover, part of the fund should be directed to a strengthened support of the Lebanese Armed Forces to reinforce their capacity for border and migration management. This last provision was negatively perceived in Lebanon, with various political forces denouncing an attempt to bribe the Lebanese government in maintaining the presence of Syrian refugees in the country.<sup>6</sup> Since 2022, the Lebanese government has intensified measures against the estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, while many political figures have repeatedly called for a lasting solution, often scapegoating the refugee population for the

<sup>1</sup> "Euro-Mediterranean Agreement," Official Journal of the European Union, May 30, 2006, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/euro\\_mediterranean\\_agreement\\_en.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/euro_mediterranean_agreement_en.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> "European Neighborhood Policy," EEAS, July 29, 2021, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-neighborhood-policy\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-neighborhood-policy_en).

<sup>3</sup> "Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood: A new Agenda for the Mediterranean," European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, February 9, 2021, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint\\_communication\\_renewed\\_partnership\\_southern\\_neighbourhood.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> "Multi-Annual Indicative Programme European Union - Lebanon, 2021-2027," EEAS 2022, [https://neighbourhoodenlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb5d2ed2-f92c-4741-8856-d32b6adb47d8\\_en?filename=C\\_2022\\_8363\\_F1\\_ANNEX\\_EN\\_V4\\_P1\\_2198189.PDF](https://neighbourhoodenlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb5d2ed2-f92c-4741-8856-d32b6adb47d8_en?filename=C_2022_8363_F1_ANNEX_EN_V4_P1_2198189.PDF).

<sup>5</sup> "President von der Leyen reaffirms EU's strong support for Lebanon and its people and announces a €1 billion package of EU funding," DG NEAR, May 2, 2024, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/presidentvon-der-leyen-reaffirms-eus-strong-support-lebanon-and-its-people-and-announces-eu1-2024-05-02\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/presidentvon-der-leyen-reaffirms-eus-strong-support-lebanon-and-its-people-and-announces-eu1-2024-05-02_en).

<sup>6</sup> "Un milliard d'euros pour aider le Liban ou pour... 'acheter son silence'?", *L'Orient Le Jour*, May 4, 2024, <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1412412/un-milliard-deuros-pour-aider-le-liban-ou-pour-acheter-son-silence-.html>.



Lebanese economic crisis. For the European Union, this announcement took place in a context of Parliament and Commission re-elections, marked by the predominance of the migratory issue. In particular, Cyprus, whose President was present for the announcement of the financial assistance in Beirut, fears an increase of the migration flux by sea from Lebanon.<sup>7</sup> The new package deal is part of the EU policy of externalizing its borders by financially supporting the capacity of Southern Mediterranean countries to curb migration. This new step represents a shift in EU policy in Lebanon. Since 2011, the EU has supported Lebanon with more than EUR 3 billion, including EUR 2.6 billion in assistance for Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon.<sup>8</sup> The EU has particularly assisted Lebanon in alleviating the burden of the presence of Syrian refugees amidst the Lebanese economic crisis, by funding and supporting the delivery of basic services, especially in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, and education sectors. Nonetheless, the support to Lebanese security forces for integrated border management had remained a secondary issue for the EU policy in Lebanon. Overall, the EU and Lebanon have reached quite a comprehensive partnership throughout the years. By supporting good

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***Nonetheless, if the EU focused on encouraging and supporting the delivery of governance and financial reforms in Lebanon, some observers argue that with the announcement of the new package deal and the prioritization of tackling migration, the EU sacrificed its leverage in pushing for the adoption of reforms in Lebanon.***  
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governance and democracy, the EU is involved in monitoring elections and implementing rule of law, anti-corruption, and financial reforms. This engagement is part of the EU's wider promotion and defense of human rights with civil society organizations, including gender equality, children's rights, and

justice for detainees.<sup>9</sup> The EU also supports strengthening the Lebanese economy, notably by supporting the resilience of micro, small, and medium enterprises and promoting an inclusive economy.<sup>10</sup> Lebanon and the EU also cooperate in the energy security sector, promoting green energy development and environment and natural resources conservation.<sup>11</sup> While the EU has consistently promoted stability in the Middle East and Lebanon, it has increased its cooperation with Lebanon on security issues, especially by supporting the capacities of Lebanon's security forces. Nonetheless, if the EU focused on encouraging and supporting the delivery of governance and financial reforms in Lebanon, some observers argue that with the announcement of the new

<sup>7</sup> "Cyprus calls for EU help to manage record Syrian migration from Lebanon", *The Guardian*, April 6, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/06/cyprus-calls-for-eu-help-to-manage-record-syrian-migration-from-lebanon>.

<sup>8</sup> "President von der Leyen reaffirms EU's strong support for Lebanon and its people and announces a €1 billion package of EU funding," DG NEAR, May 2, 2024, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/presidentvon-der-leyen-reaffirms-eus-strong-support-lebanon-and-its-people-and-announces-eu1-2024-05-02\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/presidentvon-der-leyen-reaffirms-eus-strong-support-lebanon-and-its-people-and-announces-eu1-2024-05-02_en).

<sup>9</sup> "Supporting Human Rights in Lebanon 2023-2024," EEAS, March 11, 2024, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/supporting-human-rights-lebanon-2023-2024\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/supporting-human-rights-lebanon-2023-2024_en).

<sup>10</sup> "Multi-Annual Indicative Programme European Union - Lebanon, 2021-2027," European Commission, [https://neighbourhoodenlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb5d2ed2-f92c-4741-8856-d32b6adb47d8\\_en?filename=C\\_2022\\_8363\\_F1\\_ANNEX\\_EN\\_V4\\_P1\\_2198189.PDF](https://neighbourhoodenlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb5d2ed2-f92c-4741-8856-d32b6adb47d8_en?filename=C_2022_8363_F1_ANNEX_EN_V4_P1_2198189.PDF).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

package deal and the prioritization of tackling migration, the EU sacrificed its leverage in pushing for the adoption of reforms in Lebanon.

This analysis will address the EU's policy towards Lebanon by focusing on three main aspects of this policy. First, the engagement of the EU with Lebanese civil society to support the conduct of reforms to uphold democracy and good governance. Second, the EU's financial assistance to mitigate the Syrian refugee crisis and its implementation in Lebanon. And third, the strengthened cooperation between Lebanon and the EU on security issues, especially for migration management. These three dimensions are interdependent of each other and the EU has developed a holistic approach when it comes to policy making towards Lebanon.

## **EU SUPPORT TO LEBANESE STATE REFORMS, GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY, AND RULE OF LAW**

Through the ENP framework, the EU cooperates with Lebanon on developing good governance, democracy, and the rule of law through the spectrum of human rights, as developed in the EU Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy for Lebanon (2020-2024).<sup>12</sup> With the "Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework" (3RF) - a platform developed by the UNDP, World Bank, and EU to rebuild Beirut and Lebanese state institutions in the aftermath of the Beirut blast - the EU also maintains its cooperation with Lebanon when it comes to reform. The platform engages with the Lebanese government and civil society to develop anti-corruption, public procurement, and public administration reforms. It also supports initiatives for the justice, education, and health sector reforms and legislation for gender equality. Overall, since 2011, the EU has provided EUR 670.3 million in bilateral assistance to enhance good governance and support reforms, as well as to build a resilient economy and promote a green and sustainable recovery.<sup>13</sup>

The EU has supported election processes as a means to support dialogue between civil society and the government and ensure that an inclusive and transparent democratic process is maintained in the country. It conducted three Electoral Observation Missions (EOM) in Lebanon in 2007, 2018, and 2022 covering the Lebanese parliamentary elections. EOMs are performed at the request of the partner government and allow for observation and recommendations on the election process. While the last EOM noted positive developments, notably the creation of the Supervisory Commission on Elections, the EOM still identified necessary reforms to comply with international standards for free and fair elections.<sup>14</sup> Through the Lebanese Elections Assistance

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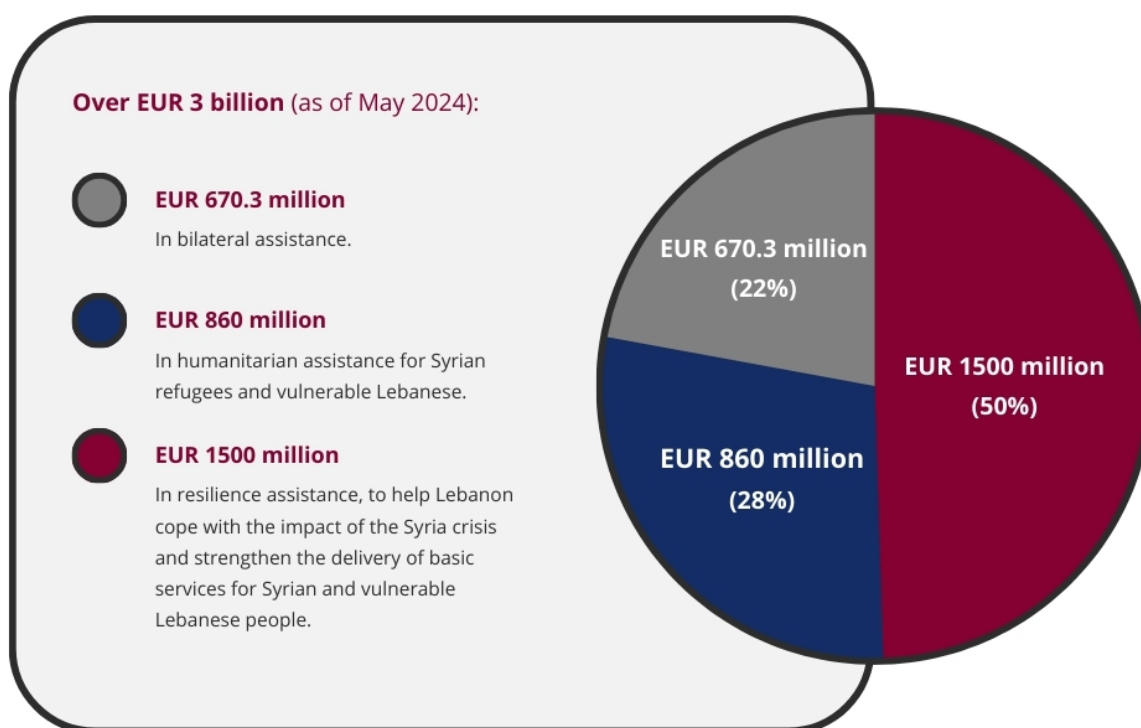
<sup>12</sup> "Multi-Annual Indicative Programme European Union - Lebanon, 2021-2027," EEAS, 2022, [https://neighbourhoodenlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/lebanon\\_en](https://neighbourhoodenlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/lebanon_en).

<sup>13</sup> "Lebanon: EU Support to Lebanon," DG NEAR, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/lebanon\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/lebanon_en).

<sup>14</sup> "European Union Election Observation Mission, Lebanon 2022, Final Report," EEAS, July 7, 2022, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/EU%20EOM%20Lebanon%202022%20Final%20report%20English\\_0.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/EU%20EOM%20Lebanon%202022%20Final%20report%20English_0.pdf)

Project (LEAP), the EU works with UNDP and the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities to strengthen institutions and electoral processes for holding free and fair elections.<sup>15</sup> LEAP also gathers a group of local civil society organizations (CSOs) to advocate for electoral reforms, gender equality, and inclusion of people with disabilities in election processes. By supporting civil society initiatives, the EU also advocates for the holding of timely elections and encourages democratic participation. For instance, in June 2023, the EU as part of the International Support Group for Lebanon,<sup>16</sup> urged for the Lebanese political stakeholders to assume their responsibilities and elect a new President.<sup>17</sup> However, the EU actions in the field of elections have proven limited in pushing Lebanon to break from its political deadlock. Since 2022, the Lebanese government has been paralyzed by a presidential vacuum, which greatly impacted the holding of local elections. Municipal elections have been postponed three times since 2022, now potentially scheduled for 2025 and considerably affecting the functioning of local bodies. The government has used the lack of financial resources and, since October 7, the security situation in South Lebanon to justify their postponement.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 1: EU Financial Assistance to Lebanon since 2011**



<sup>15</sup> "Lebanese Elections Assistance Project (LEAP)," UNDP, <https://www.undp.org/lebanon/projects/lebaneseelections-assistance-project-leap>.

<sup>16</sup> The International Support Group for Lebanon gathers the United Nations, the European Union, the Arab League and the governments of China, France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

<sup>17</sup> "Statement of the International Support Group for Lebanon", EEAS, June 6, 2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/statement-international-support-group-lebanon-13\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/statement-international-support-group-lebanon-13_en).

<sup>18</sup> "Municipal and mayoral councils extended for yet another year," *L'Orient Today*, April 25, 2024, <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1411616/municipal-and-mayoral-councils-extended-for-yet-another-year.html>.



The EU has also encouraged reforms in the Lebanese judicial system. The explosion of the Beirut port and the failure of the Lebanese investigation shed further light on the dysfunction of the Lebanese justice system. Nearly four years later, the investigation remains hampered by political interference, suspended since December 2021.<sup>19</sup> The EU Multi-Annual Indicative Plan for Lebanon set out the goal of strengthening the effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency of the judiciary, while the EU Human Rights Strategy for Lebanon recalls the necessity to promote accountability, access to justice, and fight torture and inhumane conditions in detention centers.<sup>20</sup> In this context, the EU supports the conduct of reforms of the judiciary system through the 3RF, focusing on the independence of judiciary, and on administrative, and financial courts. Together with UNDP, they encouraged the launching of the Justice Forum in February 2024 to develop a roadmap for judicial reforms.<sup>21</sup>

The EU also facilitated the engagement of the Venice Commission, a consultative body of the Council of Europe, independent from the EU, to review two draft laws on the independence of judicial and administrative courts in 2021<sup>22</sup> and 2023.<sup>23</sup> However, despite the support given to the judiciary, the lack of will to reform amidst Lebanon's political paralysis has impeded concrete achievements.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, while the Beirut blast was an incentive for the EU to focus on the judiciary in Lebanon, and the EU Parliament voted a resolution for this purpose in July 2023,<sup>25</sup> no momentum was reached within the international community to push for a UN international fact-finding mission.

In parallel, in response to the acute economic crisis, imputed to corruption and poor financial administration of the Lebanese state, the EU supports the conduct of financial and economic recovery reforms based on IMF recommendations. In April 2022, Lebanon signed a Staff-Level agreement with the IMF that would grant USD 3 billion over four years on the condition that the Lebanese government undertook a series of financial and monetary reforms. Nonetheless, as noted by the IMF in June 2023, progress on the required measures has been slow, and the few measures achieved are considered insufficient, especially regarding the bank secrecy law adopted in October 2022.<sup>26</sup> Although the EU reiterated its financial and technical support for the

<sup>19</sup> Kaiss, Ramzi, "UN Expert Raises Alarm Over Ineffective Beirut Blast Investigation", Human Rights Watch, 15/05/2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/15/un-expert-raises-alarm-over-ineffective-beirut-blast-investigation>.

<sup>20</sup> "Multi-Annual Indicative Programme European Union - Lebanon, 2021-2027", 2022, EEAS, [https://neighbourhoodenlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb5d2ed2-f92c-4741-8856-d32b6adb47d8\\_en?filename=C\\_2022\\_8363\\_F1\\_ANNEX\\_EN\\_V4\\_P1\\_2198189.PDF](https://neighbourhoodenlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb5d2ed2-f92c-4741-8856-d32b6adb47d8_en?filename=C_2022_8363_F1_ANNEX_EN_V4_P1_2198189.PDF).

<sup>21</sup> "Justice", Lebanon 3RF, <https://www.lebanon3rf.org/justice>.

<sup>22</sup> "Lebanon: Opinion on the Draft Law on the Independence of Judicial Courts", European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), June 20, 2022, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2022\)020-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2022)020-e).

<sup>23</sup> "Lebanon: Opinion on the Draft Law on the Administrative Judiciary", European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), March 19, 2024, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDLAD\(2024\)006-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDLAD(2024)006-e).

<sup>24</sup> "The Challenging Path of Reforms in Lebanon: The Persistent Fight for Judicial Independence", MAHARAT, 2023, <https://maharatfoundation.org/media/2497/3rf-independence-of-the-judiciary-2.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> "Joint Motion for a Resolution on the situation in Lebanon", European Parliament, July 11, 2023, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2023-0323\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2023-0323_EN.html).

<sup>26</sup> IMF, "Lebanon: 2023 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for Lebanon", IMF, June 29, 2023, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2023/06/28/Lebanon-2023-Article-IV-Consultation-Press-Release-Staff-Report-and-Statement-by-the-535372>.

conduct of reforms, the viability of the foreseen IMF deal is, after two years, questioned.<sup>27</sup> In parallel, with the 3RF, the EU supported the establishment of the Public Procurement Authority and the Anti-National Corruption Commission, although challenges remain for these institutions to be fully operational.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, through the ENP, the EU engages with partner countries and encourages reforms through an “incentive-based approach,” meaning that the EU agrees to provide additional financial support if a partner successfully implements reforms supported by the EU.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, this approach finds its limit in Lebanon as institutional paralysis and endemic corruption hinders political willingness for reforms. As suggested by the ENP renewal in 2015, the alternative presented to the EU in such a case is to disengage with the public sector and cooperate with civil, economic, and social actors instead.<sup>30</sup> Within this context, the EU has considerably increased its support to civil society initiatives since 2019, to support democracy and reforms, refraining from engaging directly with the Lebanese government. In particular, the 3RF was developed to answer the shifting strategy of international actors in Lebanon, thought as a platform to bridge the gap between Lebanese state institutions and civil society to implement sustainable reforms.

***Although the EU is a fitted actor to support reforms, having the capacity to engage both with Lebanese state actors and civil society stakeholders, its ability to overcome the challenges of Lebanon’s intricate political environment has remained limited.***

Although the EU is a fitted actor to support reforms, having the capacity to engage both with Lebanese state actors and civil society stakeholders, its ability to overcome the challenges of Lebanon’s intricate political environment has remained limited. Furthermore, if the increased support to Lebanese civil society allowed the EU to break away from previous policies, which supported the Lebanese government and were viewed as entertaining state corruption, this strategy also presents risks. Some have raised the issue that Lebanon is increasingly becoming a “republic of the NGOs,”<sup>31</sup> undermining the Lebanese state as a reliable actor. If no transfer of capacities from civil society to the Lebanese government is eventually carried out, this would

<sup>27</sup> "Chami: Lebanon still not close to unlocking IMF deal two years since staff-level agreement", *L'Orient Today*, April 9, 2024, <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1409811/chami-lebanon-still-not-close-to-unlocking-imf-deal-two-years-since-staff-level-agreement.html#:~:text=Two%20years%20have%20passed%20since,set%20by%20the%20international%20institution>.

<sup>28</sup> "Anti-Corruption, Public Financial Management, Public Procurement and Civil Service Reform Working Group Minutes of Meeting", 3RF, January 11, 2024, <https://www.lebanon3rf.org/anti-corruption>.

<sup>29</sup> "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy", European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, November 18, 2025, [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118\\_staff-working-document\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_staff-working-document_en.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Fawaz, Mona and Harb, Mona, "Is Lebanon Becoming Another 'Republic of the NGOs'?", Beirut Urban Lab, October 13, 2020, <https://beiruturbanlab.com/en/Details/697>.

ultimately pose challenges to the goal of the EU to restore genuine socio-economic stability in Lebanon.

## EU SUPPORT TO LEBANON THROUGH THE MITIGATION OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

The EU is one of the main actors contributing to the mitigation of the Syrian refugee crisis in the Middle East. Since 2017, the EU has organized the yearly Brussels Conference on “Supporting the future of Syria and the region” to raise pledges and loans from the international community. In 2023, the conference raised EUR 5.6 billion in pledges for 2023 and beyond, of which EUR 3.7 billion came from the EU Commission and EU Member States.<sup>32</sup> Overall, since the beginning of the war in Syria, the EU has mobilized more than EUR 24.9 billion to mitigate the crisis and support countries hosting refugees in the region.<sup>33</sup>

It is estimated that Lebanon hosts 1.5 million Syrian refugees, along with 180,000 Palestine refugees, making it one of the countries with the largest number of refugees per capita and per square kilometer in the world.<sup>34</sup> Since 2011, the EU allocated EUR 2.6 billion to support Lebanon, with EUR 860 million provided for humanitarian assistance and EUR 1.5 billion to help Lebanon cope with the impact of the Syrian crisis and strengthen the delivery of basic services for Syrian and vulnerable Lebanese people.<sup>35</sup> The EU disburses the financial assistance to mitigate the crisis in Lebanon through multiple instruments. The pledges made at the Brussels conferences allow for the funding of the “Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan” (3RP), a multi-functional platform that gathers humanitarian and development partners, which is co-led by UNHCR and UNDP to address the Syrian refugee crisis. Since 2012 and as of March 2023, the 3RP allocated USD 9.3 billion to Lebanon through the Lebanese Crisis Refugee Plan (LCRP)<sup>36</sup>, to which the European Commission contributed 7% (fifth top donor for Lebanon).<sup>37</sup> The contributions of the donors for Lebanon are implemented by humanitarian, development, and government partners to sustain access to basic services, especially in education, health, and WASH sectors, and to provide protection, livelihoods, and food security. In parallel, the EU Trust Fund for Syria (known as Madad Fund) constituted the main instrument used by the EU to deliver pledges the Commission made at the Brussels conferences until 2021. The fund is now set to be integrated into the new “Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument” (NDICI),

<sup>32</sup> "Syria and the region: International community mobilises €5.6 billion during the 7th Brussels Conference", DG NEAR, June 15, 2023, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/syria-and-region-international-community-mobilises-eu56-billion-during-7th-brussels-conference-2023-06-15\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/syria-and-region-international-community-mobilises-eu56-billion-during-7th-brussels-conference-2023-06-15_en).

<sup>33</sup> "Syria: EU response to the crisis", Council of the European Union, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/syria/>.

<sup>34</sup> "UNHCR Lebanon at a Glance", UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/at-a-glance>.

<sup>35</sup> "Lebanon: EU Support to Lebanon", DG NEAR, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/lebanon\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/lebanon_en).

<sup>36</sup> "2023 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP)", United Nations, Lebanon, May 4, 2023, <https://lebanon.un.org/en/230732-2023-lebanon-crisis-response-plan-lcrp>.

<sup>37</sup> "Regional Financial Dashboard: Donors", 3RP, December 31, 2023, <https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/dashboards/>.



which supports the EU External Neighborhood Policy. Out of the EUR 2.38 billion mobilized by the Trust Fund, including contributions from 21 EU member states, the UK, and Turkey since 2014, Lebanon has been the recipient of 44% of the fund, or approximately USD 1.06 billion.<sup>38</sup> The funded projects are implemented mainly by INGOs, NGOs, EU MS Agencies, and development banks. As of September 2023, 55 projects were still running in Lebanon, covering basic and higher education, livelihoods, health, WASH infrastructure, women and child protection, and social cohesion sectors.<sup>39</sup> Especially since the outbreak of Lebanon's economic crisis in 2019, these projects benefit both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese.

In particular, the EU contributes to strengthening the WASH, health, and education sectors in cooperation with the Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). In 2018, the EU partnered with INGOs and NGOs to implement WASH projects, particularly to improve water and wastewater services in the country.<sup>40</sup> In 2022, the EU funded the rehabilitation of water pumping stations with the Beirut and Mount Lebanon Water Establishment, in partnership with UNICEF WASH.<sup>41</sup> Through its support to maintain and reinforce WASH infrastructure in Lebanon, the EU also partnered with UNICEF to control the cholera outbreak that affected the country in October 2022 by ensuring access to clean water in Lebanon, notably in Tripoli.<sup>42</sup> The EU also contributes to support the Lebanese health sector to reinforce the capacity of Lebanese authorities to respond to basic health needs. With UNICEF, the EU funded projects between 2014 and 2018 for a value of EUR 173 million, providing 200 primary healthcare centers of the MoPH, as well as public hospitals, with new equipment, supplies in medicines, and vaccines for children.<sup>43</sup> Since 2018, the EU has partnered with an NGO consortium led by the International Medical Corps to similarly support healthcare centers in Lebanon for a budget of EUR 61.8 million.<sup>44,45</sup> Finally, the EU has continuously supported the public education sector in Lebanon since 2017,<sup>46</sup> which has been greatly affected by multiple school interruptions due to the COVID-19 crisis and teachers' strikes

<sup>38</sup> "11th Results Report Progress Update", EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, September 2023, [https://trustfund-syria-region.ec.europa.eu/document/download/60fbb431-9449-47b4-ba43-37a52a7c31a3\\_en?filename=11th%20UTF%20Results%20Report.pdf](https://trustfund-syria-region.ec.europa.eu/document/download/60fbb431-9449-47b4-ba43-37a52a7c31a3_en?filename=11th%20UTF%20Results%20Report.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> "EU-MADAD supports WASH interventions across Lebanon with 8million USD project", EU and WAAD, November 16, 2018, <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/eu-madad-supports-wash-interventions-across-lebanon-8million-usd-project>.

<sup>41</sup> Dupire, Camille, "Hope flows back to Lebanon's communities thanks to EU and UNICEF's WASH partnership", EU Neighbours South, May 5, 2022, <https://south.euneighbours.eu/story/hope-flows-back-lebanons-communities-thanks-eu-unicef-wash-partnership/>.

<sup>42</sup> "The European Union and UNICEF extend their support to Water Establishments during Cholera outbreak", UNICEF, December 16, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/stories/european-union-and-unicef-extend-their-support-water-establishments-during-cholera-outbreak>.

<sup>43</sup> "European Union renews commitment - support for the Lebanese Healthcare System reaches €173 million", UNICEF, December 18, 2018, <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/press-releases/european-union-renews-commitment-support-lebanese-healthcare-system-reaches-173>.

<sup>44</sup> "Project Factsheet: Reduce economic barriers hindering access to health services in Lebanon", EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, 2018, [https://trustfund-syria-region.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2b2f70b2-e104-4d83-9d89-b01b483be7a5\\_it](https://trustfund-syria-region.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2b2f70b2-e104-4d83-9d89-b01b483be7a5_it).

<sup>45</sup> "Signing Ceremony Between EU Delegation in Lebanon, International Medical Corps and Premiere Urgence Internationale to Launch REBAHS LPSP II", National News Agency, October 27, 2022, <https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/en/miscellaneous/572242/signing-ceremony-between-eu-delegation-in-lebanon>.

<sup>46</sup> "The European Union Commits an Additional 40 million euros to the Education Sector in Lebanon", EEAS, EU Delegation to Lebanon, December 20, 2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/european-union-commits-additional-40-million-euros-education-sector-lebanon\\_en?s=203](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/european-union-commits-additional-40-million-euros-education-sector-lebanon_en?s=203).

amidst the economic crisis. The challenge posed to the education sector is multi-layered. With the crisis, many families have had to remove their children from school due to the increase in fees, while others had to rely on their children to contribute to the household income generation. Through its projects implemented by UNICEF, the EU contributes to the rehabilitation of school facilities, equipping them with drinkable water and solar energy and covering the enrollment of up to 470,000 vulnerable Lebanese and non-Lebanese school-aged children, mostly Syrian refugees, in formal education every year.<sup>47</sup> The EU confirmed its support with the announcement in December 2023 of EUR 40 million in additional funds to support the education sector with UNICEF.<sup>48</sup> This fund should contribute to helping MEHE implement its five-year plan for general education for 2025 and the Transition Resilience Education Fund aimed at strengthening governance and transparency, as well as learning outcomes for children.

Although these projects were developed within the framework of Syrian refugee crisis mitigation, they also benefit vulnerable Lebanese. By coordinating with relevant Lebanese ministries, the EU contributes to maintaining the capacity of the government to provide basic services amidst the Lebanese economic crisis and to strengthening the effectiveness of public services. Nonetheless, the support of the EU toward the Syrian refugee population is often denounced by Lebanese politicians, accusing the EU of entertaining the presence of refugees in Lebanon by providing humanitarian aid to the detriment of the Lebanese population and economy.<sup>49</sup> Lebanese politicians recurrently scapegoat the presence of Syrian refugees for the economic crisis and the deterioration of basic services, in reality, induced by decades of poor public policies and administration.

## EU-LEBANON COOPERATION ON SECURITY

As set out in the priorities of the renewed Enlarged Neighborhood Policy in 2015, the EU cooperates with partner countries on security matters and works towards the stabilization of the External Neighborhood region. Amidst an unstable security context in the Middle East, the Lebanese economic crisis has further destabilized the security situation of the country. Along these lines, the indicative multi-annual plan for Lebanon (2021-2027) highlighted security issues on which the EU and Lebanon should cooperate. It especially underlined the necessity for

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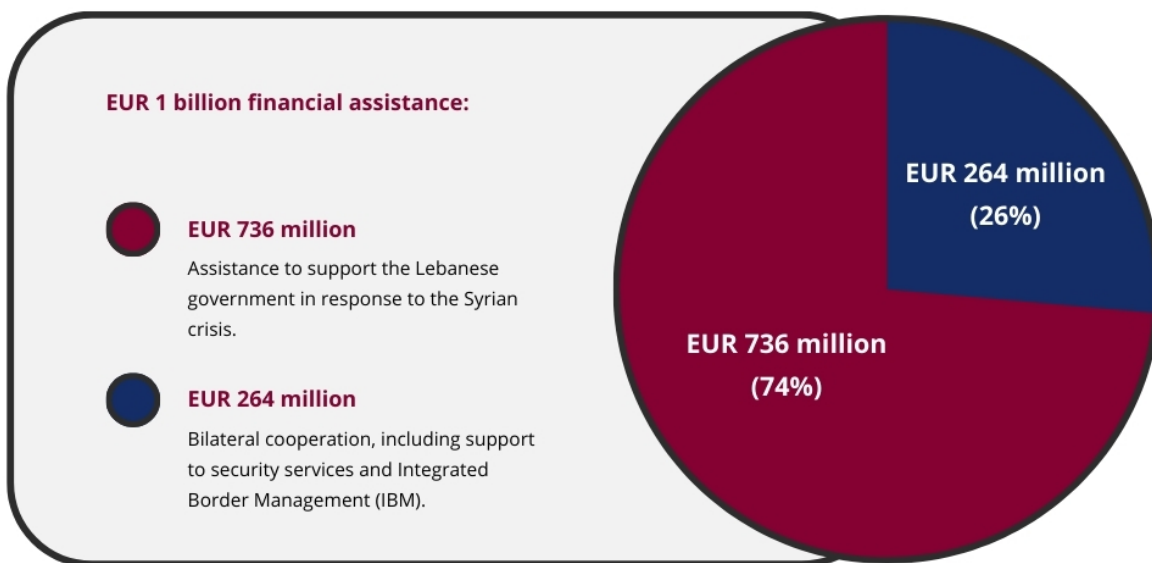
<sup>47</sup> "The Ministry of Education launches the Transition Resilience Education Fund, to support Lebanon's Education Sector", UNICEF, June 22, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/press-releases/ministry-education-launches-transition-resilience-education-fund-support-lebanons>.

<sup>48</sup> "The European Union Commits an Additional 40 million euros to the Education Sector in Lebanon", EEAS, EU Delegation to Lebanon, December 20, 2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/european-union-commits-additional-40-million-euros-education-sector-lebanon\\_en?s=203](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/european-union-commits-additional-40-million-euros-education-sector-lebanon_en?s=203).

<sup>49</sup> "Au Liban, le paragraphe de la résolution européenne sur les réfugiés ne passe pas", *L'Orient le Jour*, July 13, 2023, <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1343347/au-liban-le-paragraphe-de-la-resolution-europeenne-sur-les-refugies-ne-passe-pas.html>.

Lebanon to tackle terrorist threats, counter cross-border crime, including smuggling and trafficking, and address irregular migration.<sup>50</sup>

**Figure 2: Provisional Disbursement of the EU Financial Assistance to Lebanon (2024-2027)**



To this aim, the EU and Lebanon cooperate on counter-terrorism, notably through the Advance Counter-Terrorism for Lebanon (ACT) project<sup>51,52</sup>. Active since 2020, this project paved the way for the development of a National Counter-Terrorism Strategy and supports the future creation of a National Cyber-Incident and Response Team. EU assistance aims at building Lebanese national capacities to react to terrorism threats, organized crime, and cyber risks. Since December 2022, at the request of the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the EU also has supported the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) through the European Peace Facility (EPF), an instrument aimed at enhancing the ability of the EU to prevent conflict and preserve peace and stability. Greatly affected by the economic crisis and the devaluation of the local currency, the EU assisted the LAF with EUR 6 million, providing the army with medical equipment to ensure military medical services.<sup>53</sup> Since 2012, the EU also funds a project implemented by the International Centre for

<sup>50</sup> "Multi-Annual Indicative Programme European Union - Lebanon, 2021-2027", EEAS, 2022, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb5d2ed2-f92c-4741-8856-d32b6adb47d8\\_en?filename=C\\_2022\\_8363\\_F1\\_ANNEX\\_EN\\_V4\\_P1\\_2198189.PDF](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb5d2ed2-f92c-4741-8856-d32b6adb47d8_en?filename=C_2022_8363_F1_ANNEX_EN_V4_P1_2198189.PDF).

<sup>51</sup> Funded by the EU and implemented by FIIAPP, a Spanish foundation for public policy placed under the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>52</sup> "Lebanon's Counter Terrorism Project Takes Stock", FIIAPP, March 27, 2024, <https://www.fiiapp.org/en/noticias/lebanons-counter-terrorism-project-takes-stock/>.

<sup>53</sup> "European Peace Facility: Council adopts assistance measures in support of the armed forces of five countries", Council of the European Union, December 1, 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/01/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-assistance-measures-in-support-of-the-armed-forces-of-five-countries/>.



Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) at around EUR 19.3 million, to enhance the capabilities of the Lebanese authorities for integrated border management in the north and east of the country.<sup>54</sup> Through this project, the EU aims to help Lebanon fight terrorism and serious cross-border crimes, but also to manage any additional influx of refugees at the border.

Until now, the EU's cooperation with Lebanon on security issues has remained minor compared

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***Nonetheless, the increasing prevalence of migration control within EU policy is progressively shifting its priority actions in the Southern Neighborhood, including Lebanon. With the increase in migration toward European countries, the EU has reinforced its policies to control migration influx internally but also in its Neighborhood, through the externalization of its borders.***  
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to other EU sectors of action. Nonetheless, the increasing prevalence of migration control within EU policy is progressively shifting its priority actions in the Southern Neighborhood, including Lebanon. With the increase in migration toward European countries, the EU has reinforced its policies to control migration influx internally but also in its Neighborhood, through the externalization of its borders.<sup>55</sup> For the EU, it has become necessary to prevent migrants from attempting to leave by sea and enter Europe by creating a buffer zone in Southern Mediterranean countries.<sup>56</sup> Through migration deals with partner countries, the EU aims to improve its capacity at border management and migration control. In May 2024, the president of the EU Commission visited Beirut and announced a package of EUR 1 billion to support Lebanon, to be implemented until 2027. While EUR 736 million should be directed to assist Syrian refugees and strengthen the capacity of the Lebanese government to provide basic services, EUR 264 million are earmarked for bilateral cooperation, notably to support security services with integrated border management and migration control.<sup>57</sup> This deal is similar to the one the EU concluded with Tunisia in July 2023, considered as the blueprint for the development of EU migration deals in the Southern Neighborhood.<sup>58</sup> It provided EUR 105 million in immediate aid to support the Tunisian coast guard and border management, EUR 150 million in direct budgetary support, and EUR 900 million in macroeconomic assistance, with the aim of supporting socio-economic reforms adopted by Tunisia.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, many observers have questioned its implementation, especially with regard to the respect of refugees and migrants' rights. Since August 2023, the Tunisian

<sup>54</sup> "Enhanced Capability for Integrated Border Management in Lebanon", EEAS, EU Delegation to Lebanon, March 5, 2020, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/enhanced-capability-integrated-border-management-lebanon\\_en?s=203](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/enhanced-capability-integrated-border-management-lebanon_en?s=203).

<sup>55</sup> "European Policies of Border Externalization in Lebanon: Securitization of Migration Management and Systemic Human Rights Violations", Lebanese Centre for Human Rights, July 2023, [http://www.cldh-lebanon.org/HumanRightsBrief/e6577ae5-a3dc-430b-9d70-15d126a014d7\\_Europe%20Policies%20of%20Border%20Externalization%20in%20Lebanon%20Report%20-%20July%202023.pdf](http://www.cldh-lebanon.org/HumanRightsBrief/e6577ae5-a3dc-430b-9d70-15d126a014d7_Europe%20Policies%20of%20Border%20Externalization%20in%20Lebanon%20Report%20-%20July%202023.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> Martini, Lorena Stella and Megerisi, Tarek, "Road to nowhere: Why Europe's border externalisation is a dead end", European Council on Foreign Relations, December 14, 2023, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/road-to-nowhere-why-europes-border-externalisation-is-a-dead-end/>.

<sup>57</sup> "EU pledges \$1 bn for Lebanon, urges curbs against illegal migration", *Al-Monitor*, May 2, 2024, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/05/eu-pledges-1-bn-lebanon-urges-curbs-against-illegal-migration>.

<sup>58</sup> Martini, Lorena Stella and Megerisi, Tarek, "Road to nowhere: Why Europe's border externalisation is a dead end", European Council on Foreign Relations, December 14, 2023, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/road-to-nowhere-why-europes-border-externalisation-is-a-dead-end/>.

<sup>59</sup> "At a glance: EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding", European Parliament, 2023, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/751467/EPRS\\_ATA\(2023\)751467\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/751467/EPRS_ATA(2023)751467_EN.pdf).

government has increased interceptions of migrants at sea and expelled sub-Saharan migrants to the Libyan and Algerian borders.<sup>60</sup> The EU Ombudsman, an independent organ that promotes good administration in EU agencies, opened an inquiry on the lack of prior human rights impact assessment and the application conditions of the fund in case of human rights violations.<sup>61</sup> The EU signed similar agreements with Morocco in December 2023 and an EUR 8 billion deal with Egypt in March 2024. There is growing criticism that by signing such agreements with authoritarian-leaning governments that disrespect human rights provisions, the EU is legitimizing authoritarianism.<sup>62</sup>

Meanwhile in Lebanon, human rights NGOs and activists fear that the fund will fuel anti-Syrian rhetoric among Lebanese politicians and encourage the authorities to resume hostile measures against Syrian refugees. A few weeks after the EU deal, the Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, announced the government would resume developing a plan for the return of refugees and urged international support to facilitate refugee repatriation to Syria.<sup>63</sup> He also mentioned the need to enforce Lebanese laws to deport illegal residents in coordination with the UNHCR, and called for coordination with Syrian authorities to hand over displaced prisoners and regulate migration across legal crossings. Furthermore, by financing the Lebanese security agencies, in particular the Lebanese Armed Forces, to increase their border management capacities, the EU could become indirectly complicit in human rights violations, in rupture with its commitment to the defense of human rights and international law. Since 2019, Lebanese security agencies have come under scrutiny from human rights NGOs, as they conducted arbitrary arrests and summarily deported Syrian refugees back to Syria.<sup>64</sup> After the announcement of the EU package deal, a joint statement of international and Lebanese human rights NGOs recalled the obligations of Lebanese authorities and the EU to respect their obligations under international law, especially *non-refoulement*.<sup>65</sup> It further noted that such EU deals lack adequate monitoring and oversight mechanisms to ensure the EU is not complicit in human rights violations.

The EU's apparent policy shift toward Lebanon on the Syrian refugee crisis is motivated by internal dynamics and debates in the EU on migration. The migration influx from Lebanon has become a pressing issue for EU member states, especially Cyprus. The latter declared a migration crisis at the beginning of 2024 in the face of increased arrivals of migrants from Lebanon, mainly Syrians but also Palestinians and Lebanese.<sup>66</sup> Cypriot President, Niko

<sup>60</sup> Khan, Humzah, "From Tunis to Cairo: Europe Extends Its Border Across North Africa", Carnegie Endowment, April 9, 2024, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2024/04/from-tunis-to-cairo-europe-extends-its-border-across-north-africa?lang=en&center=middle-east>.

<sup>61</sup> "EU External Partners: Ombudsman Renews Inquiry into EU-Tunisia Deal", European Council on Refugees and Exiles, April 26, 2024, <https://ecre.org/eu-external-partners-ombudsman-renews-inquiry-into-eu-tunisia-deal-%E2%80%95-auditors-raise-concerns-about-implementation-of-eu-deal-with-turkiye-%E2%80%95-eu-migration-deal-with-lebanon-may-be-immin/>.

<sup>62</sup> Francavilla, Claudio, "EU Deal with Egypt Rewards Authoritarianism, Betrays 'EU Values'", Human Rights Watch March 15, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/03/15/eu-deal-egypt-rewards-authoritarianism-betrays-eu-values>.

<sup>63</sup> "Lebanese Parliament debates EU's \$1 billion aid and pushes for border security", *L'Orient Today*, May 15, 2024, <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1413891/lebanese-parliament-debates-eus-eur1-billion-aid-as-it-happens.html>.

<sup>64</sup> "Lebanon: Joint Statement - Respect International Law in EU-Lebanon Migration Deal", ACHR, May 2, 2024, <https://www.achrightrights.org/en/2024/05/02/13453/>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Stamouli, Nektaria, "Cyprus declares migration crisis, calls for EU to help", *POLITICO*, April 3, 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/cyprus-declares-migration-crisis-calls-eu-to-intervene/>.

Christodoulides, had also launched discussions with like-minded EU member states to start considering designating some parts of Syria as safe zones to allow refugees and migrants to return there.<sup>67</sup> Although this proposition does not seem to have gained momentum, the presence of the Cypriot President during the announcement of the package deal in Beirut is an indicator of the EU policy shift in its cooperation with Lebanon. Some Lebanese politicians have denounced the deal as an EU bribe to maintain Syrian refugees in Lebanon, despite it being a transit country not party to the Refugee Convention.<sup>68</sup> While an MoU remains to be signed, the majority of the fund should help maintain basic services for vulnerable people in Lebanon, including refugees, IDPs, and host communities.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, the reinforcement of integrated border management and the support to the Lebanese security forces cast doubt on the benefits of this fund for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU and Lebanon have developed a comprehensive partnership, which allows the EU to be actively involved via its “Three-Dimensional” policy. Especially since the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2019, the EU has focused on strengthening civil society by multiplying projects with civil society organizations to support good governance and push for reforms. To the EU, as exemplified by the 3RF platform, engaging with civil society is a means to rebuild trust between the Lebanese government and the population. However, the political paralysis and deterioration of the state apparatus have posed a challenge to the EU incentive-based approach to induce reforms. While it contributed to the consolidation of Lebanon’s civil society amidst the acute economic crisis, it did not allow for significant achievement in democracy, justice, public services, financial, and anti-corruption reforms at the state level. Nonetheless, the EU continues to support Lebanon, especially to mitigate the effects of the Syrian refugee presence and the impact of the economic crisis on the most vulnerable Lebanese. In particular, the rehabilitation of basic services in health, education, and WASH sectors helped prevent further deterioration of these public sectors, benefiting the Lebanese people. Implementing these projects with the concerned Lebanese ministries also encouraged the Lebanese

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However, while the announcement of the EUR 1 billion financial assistance confirmed the EU will continue to support Lebanon through a multi-sectoral approach, it also indicated that EU priorities have shifted, prioritizing the curbing of migration over maintaining its leverage on pushing for reforms in Lebanon.”

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> "EU's €1 billion aid package prompts criticism in Lebanon", *The National News*, May 7, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2024/05/07/eus-1-billion-aid-package-prompts-criticism-in-lebanon/>.

<sup>69</sup> "President von der Leyen reaffirms EU's strong support for Lebanon and its people and announces a €1 billion package of EU funding", DG NEAR, May 2, 2024, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/president-von-der-leyen-reaffirms-eus-strong-support-lebanon-and-its-people-and-announces-eu1-2024-05-02\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/president-von-der-leyen-reaffirms-eus-strong-support-lebanon-and-its-people-and-announces-eu1-2024-05-02_en).

government in developing clear strategies to improve the delivery of these services. However, while the announcement of the EUR 1 billion financial assistance confirmed the EU will continue to support Lebanon through a multi-sectoral approach, it also indicated that EU priorities have shifted, prioritizing the curbing of migration over maintaining its leverage on pushing for reforms in Lebanon.

While the President of the EU Commission did mention that the fund would support Lebanon in adopting economic, financial, and banking reforms, it did not mention the reforms were conditional on the implementation of the fund. Furthermore, as the Lebanese state is still paralyzed by the presidential vacuum, there are no indicators that Lebanon is now serious about engaging in genuine reform. While the MoU is still needed to understand how the assistance will be disbursed, it seems the EU is straying away from its incentive-based approach with the Lebanese government. Although, as explained before, the EU approach faced challenges in Lebanon, leading to limited results in reforming the Lebanese state, going back on it and possibly reverting to directly financing Lebanese state institutions will not produce better achievements. As noted by former Lebanese Minister of Economy and Trade, Nasser Saidi, the absence of transparency in the fund's implementation risks fueling continued corruption and enriching Lebanese politicians.<sup>70</sup> He further added that this fund would not successfully help the EU achieve its migration policy, but rather support a failed Lebanese state without contributing to its socioeconomic stability. Quite on the contrary, as mentioned by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), avoiding tackling Lebanon's core challenges will not allow the EU to address the reasons that push people to migrate from Lebanon to Europe, whether Syrian or Lebanese.<sup>71</sup>

If prioritizing migration issues is part of the wider EU policy in the Southern Neighborhood, reinforcing the cooperation with Lebanese security forces can also be understood as a means to prevent a rise in migration flux amidst a tense regional security context. Since the beginning of the war in Gaza in October 2023, Lebanon has been affected by daily combats between Israel and Hezbollah on its southern border. As of now, more than 93,000 people, including refugees, have been internally displaced, fleeing South Lebanon.<sup>72</sup> As the situation remains unstable, fears that the situation might further deteriorate might have informed the EU prioritization of the migration issue. Nonetheless, such an EU short-term strategy to prioritize the curbing of migration would be detrimental to Lebanon in the long run. Furthermore, this would be incoherent with the policy of the EU to reinforce its cooperation with Lebanese civil society and could endanger the position the EU has built as a mediator between the Lebanese state and civil society.

Therefore, as recommended by the European Council on Foreign Relations, to preserve its long-term policy, the EU should set conditions for the implementation of the funds to secure financial

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<sup>70</sup> Dutton, Jack, "Fears mount EU's \$1.1B migration aid to Lebanon will feed political corruption", Al-Monitor, May 10, 2024, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/05/fears-mount-eus-11b-migration-aid-lebanon-will-feed-political-corruption>.

<sup>71</sup> Petillo, Kelly, "Strategic aid: How the EU-Lebanon migration deal can work", European Council on Foreign Relations, May 3, 2024, <https://ecfr.eu/article/strategic-aid-how-the-eu-lebanon-migration-deal-can-work/>.

<sup>72</sup> "Mobility Snapshot - Round 35", IOM, May 16, 2024, <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/mobility-snapshot-round-35-16-05-2024?close=true>.

and anti-corruption measures.<sup>73</sup> The EU should strive to continue implementing the fund in partnership with CSOs, NGOs, and INGOs and allow the sustainability of its ongoing policy in Lebanon. Finally, to ensure that the rights of Syrian refugees are guaranteed, the EU should use the fund as leverage to require the necessary guarantees on the part of the Lebanese government and security forces that they will not forcibly return Syrians back to Syria until the necessary safety conditions are met.

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<sup>73</sup> Petillo, Kelly, "Strategic aid: How the EU-Lebanon migration deal can work", European Council on Foreign Relations, May 3, 2024, <https://ecfr.eu/article/strategic-aid-how-the-eu-lebanon-migration-deal-can-work/>.



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