

EIB President's speech for Syria Conference

4 February 2016

The Syrian conflict is a humanitarian catastrophe that over the last five years has had a devastating effect on the Syrian people. Repercussions of this tragic Syrian conflict are felt far beyond Syria and pose challenges for many countries, particularly those that are closest and are hosting a large number of refugees. I am pleased to attend this Conference and have the opportunity to present what the European Investment Bank, the EU Bank, can do for the region.

The European Investment Bank, the EU Bank, is the International Financial Institution that has the strongest engagement in Turkey and the Middle East and North Africa. We have the technical and financial experience that is needed across the region, as well as a consolidated presence on the ground. I believe that the EU Bank should do all that it can, within its mission and scope, to address the effects of the refugee crisis.

Allow me to mention four examples of EU Bank financing in the region benefitting both refugees and the local population.

- **In Turkey.** We are currently appraising a new hospital campus with 1,875 beds in Gaziantep, close to the border with Syria. The hospital campus will serve the local population but is expected as well to provide directly or indirectly health services to Syrian refugees who have migrated to the Gaziantep area in large numbers over the last years.
- **In Jordan.** An EU Bank loan is blended with EU investment grants, in favour of the Wadi Al Arab Water System II project aimed to address water scarcity in the fourth most water-scarce country in the world, a situation that is further exacerbated by the significant influx of Syrian refugees.
- **In Lebanon.** We are cooperating with the Lebanese Association for Development, offering financial and non-financial support for refugees living in Lebanon.
- **In Egypt.** Based on EU risk capital resources, the EU Bank is a cornerstone investor in the Euromena Fund which invested in an Egyptian company that provides IT solutions including an e-

learning solution for the Syrian refugees that has been successfully implemented under a pilot phase in a refugee camp in Lebanon.

There will be a long term need for International Financial Institutions to contribute to supporting economic resilience, development and job creation in host countries and to addressing the root causes of migration. The EU Bank is committed to being part of the solution and I would like to underline that, in tackling this, we will continue our close cooperation with other International Financial Institutions.

The women, the men and the children in the region that are leaving their homes today need to be given new hope. We must be ambitious. We all need to step up our activities and to act in concert to address the current situation.

The EU Bank intends to contribute and add its part to the EU's collective action in three ways.

First, we will continue to support economic development and job creation in the region covering Turkey and the Middle East and

North Africa. Our planned lending activity over the next five years in this region is expected to exceed 15 billion euro.

This lending includes support for municipal and social infrastructure including schools and water supply, private sector development to provide jobs for young people, microenterprises, education and hospitals.

Second, the EU Bank could, subject to market conditions and absorption capacity, increase this activity by an additional 3 billion euro over five years, without receiving additional resources. This extraordinary effort would build on our experience and use existing EU Bank instruments and tools.

We are already developing with the United Kingdom a facility for technical assistance which aims to speed up project implementation on the ground. We are also making progress on a 500 million euro Migration Finance Envelope to the example of what we have already successfully implemented in other regions. I invite the donor community to join forces on these initiatives leaning on proven instruments deployed by the EU Bank.

Third, the European Investment Bank could go even further to increase our activity in the region given certain conditions. If the EU Bank would get significant amounts of third party funding for blending into concessional loans and also to provide technical assistance I would be able to propose to our shareholders to increase our activity by 8 billion euro, an increase of more than 50 percent, bringing the volume of EU Bank financing to the region to 23 billion euro between now and 2020.

But to realise this potential we need your help. The EU Bank is the largest multilateral bank active in the region. We have the contacts on the ground. We have the experience and expertise to do blending of loans and grants and achieve leverage. We have the existing structure in place to make this happen now. With your support and in partnership with all of you, we can and must do more to bring to the people of the region, stability and prosperity – and above all hope.