

## Action Fiche for Lebanon

### 1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	CLOSER: Community and labour oriented scheme for education reform (ENPI/2012/023-433)		
Total cost	EU contribution: EUR 8 million		
Aid method / Method of implementation	Project approach / Direct centralised management		
DAC-code	11000	Sector	Education
	11330		Vocational training

### 2. RATIONALE

#### 2.1. Sector context

##### **General Education:**

Public education system in Lebanon – a network of 1,360 schools spread across the entirety of the territory and welcoming students from all backgrounds – plays an irreplaceable role in promoting social cohesion and democratisation of education, as guaranteed by the Lebanese constitution. However, the system suffers a deficit in terms of quality and internal efficiency. The public schools have, in general, poorer resources than the private sector, much of the teaching force is under-qualified, and the class repetition, retardation and drop-out rates are unacceptably high. Furthermore, there are pronounced regional disparities, with school wastage being much higher in the North, the Bekaa and the South than in Beirut or Mount Lebanon.

Recognising these shortcomings, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic adopted, in April 2010, the National Education Strategy (NES) and the related Education Sector Development Plan 2010-2015 (ESDP) which set out a clear reform agenda for public education.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the ESDP outlines ten priority programmes for the upcoming five years:

- Programme No 1: 'Early Childhood Education';
- Programme No 2: 'Improving Retention and Achievement (decreasing repetition rates)';
- Programme No 3: 'Development of Infrastructure (equitable distribution of schools)';
- Programme No 4: 'Professionalisation of the Teaching Workforce';
- Programme No 5: 'Modernisation of School Management (school-based management)';
- Programme No 6: 'Achievement Assessment and Curriculum Development';
- Programme No 7: 'Citizenship Education';

<sup>1</sup> NES and ESDP can be found on the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education website: <http://www.mehe.gov.lb/Templates/Internal.aspx?PostingId=20>.

- Programme No 8: 'Information and Communication Technologies in Education';
- Programme No 9: 'National Qualification Framework';
- Programme No10: 'Institutional Development (planning, Education Management Information Systems, budgeting, etc.)'.

Since its endorsement, the majority of ESDP programmes have started, however, progress has been slow, hindered primarily by:

- the prevailing climate of deadlocked decision-making and legislative processes;
- heavily centralised nature of the sector management (both decision making and budget);
- a significant communication/information gap between the ESDP strategic centre at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the school level;
- deficient information base on the sector performance, disabling evidence-based decisions;
- and lack of feedback, as the culture of transparency, accountability and evaluation within the sector is insufficient for the moment.

The implementation of the ESDP programmes and the co-ordination with the public sector, that is among the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Centre for Education Research and Development (CERD) and Inspection, is under the auspices of the Education Sector Development Secretariat (ESDS), a unit established at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. A number of donors, including the EU with the project '*Support to Education and PFM Reforms*<sup>2</sup>', have already provided substantial support to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the ESDS for the implementation of the reform programmes (see 2.3 *Complementary Actions*). On the other hand, only little support has been so far given to the actual practitioners of the education services, to the schools and school staff. Thus the gap between the 'top' based decision-makers and 'bottom' based practitioners remains. Thus, there is a question of whether, once the reforms reach the school, the practitioners and the institutional conditions and capacities will be ready to implement them successfully.

### **Vocational and Technical Education (VTE)**

Similarly to the General Education sector, the vocational public schools fall short of meeting the needs of the people attending them. The training delivered in the majority of vocational training institutes fails to provide the skills which would match with the needs of the labour market. This is considered to significantly contribute to the high unemployment rates of the youth and a long 'waithood' period before the graduates secure their first jobs. Aligning of training with the job needs is expected to further grow in importance as 19,000 people are estimated to enter the Lebanese labour market each year in the next ten years.<sup>3</sup>

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education, more precisely the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE), which runs the public VTE system has recognised the need and has engaged in a few initiatives which provide students with exposure to real work situations and practical learning opportunities.

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<sup>2</sup> C(2009)7826 of 19 October 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Unemployment is the highest for the qualified (14% for university and 12% for secondary graduates - 18% and 26% respectively for women) and the young (25% - for men 30% - in the 25-29 age group). The time to find the first job is 2.2 years for secondary education graduates. '*Capital et travail: le grand gâchis de l'économie libanaise.*' Le Commerce du Levant, October 2011.

These are the Dual System (DS)/Meister/Small and medium enterprises (DSME) programme which links the VTE schools to a network of 630 companies, the Agro-Food Technical Institute which is based on a private-public partnership with the Syndicate of Lebanese Food Industries and the Dekwaneh Hospitality School which operates a for-profit branch.

Among these initiatives, the DSME programme – introduced as an innovation in the Lebanese VTE in co-operation with German agency for international co-operation Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in 1996 – has gained the best reputation so far, thanks to its strong practice-orientation (work-based learning ranges from 35% in the first year to 50% in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year) and positive employment results and financial return for the trainees (between 70-80% of DS graduates report to find jobs immediately after graduation in their field with the average salary of USD 800/month). Although successful, the DSME training remains to be an island, involving 6 technical and 2 non-technical occupations and some 1,600 students, and needs further consolidation and expansion.

Though VTE featured low on the education policy agenda in the past and does not feature among the ESDP ten priority programmes, the new Minister of Education and Higher Education (since June 2011) has pushed the issue to the forefront of the policy debate, with parallel support being voiced by the Ministers of Labour and the Minister of Economy. As a result, a national VTE strategy is currently being elaborated by a committee assigned by the Minister of Education.

## 2.2. Lessons learnt

There are three main lessons we have learned from the first year of the implementation of the '*Support to Education and PFM Reforms*' project that are:

- the heavy centralisation of the education system (and the reform process) results in an immediate cessation or slow-down of the change process in case of any political instability;
- the Lebanese education and VTE systems lack in solid education research (mainly non-academic field research and evaluations) which incapacitates effective policy debate and design;
- the limited consultation and co-ordination, both within the public sector and outside it, restricts the information to a small group of specialists thus failing to gain the momentum necessary for the reform.

The result oriented monitoring and the evaluation report on the project *Renforcement de l'intégration socio-économique d'enfants et de jeunes en difficulté (I&II)* have revealed that it is effective and efficient to work with schools and communities to tackle the issues of dropout and social cohesion/citizenship (Municipal Committees working with the local public schools).

The EU-financed *Education/Employment* project (completed in August 2011) has shown three major challenges faced by the traditional school-based public VTE: lack of strategic frameworks, weak links with the private sector and lack of attractiveness. The final evaluation of the project recommends the EU to undertake '*interventions with the German Agency for International Co-operation, or GIZ, who ...has been able to overcome the main issues and obstacles and raise awareness towards linking Education to Employment. Its intervention method, because of its anteriority and longstanding presence, became a reference for the DGVTE.*'

### 2.3. Complementary actions

The proposed programme is complementary to:

1. Other initiatives in support of the ESDP (with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education):
  - EU-funded '*Support to Education and PFM Reforms*' (EUR 13.7 million, 2011-2015) supporting the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the implementation of ESDP programmes No 2 'Improving Retention and Achievement', programme No 7 'Citizenship Education' and programme No 10: 'Institutional Development (in particular, budgeting)';
  - United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded *D-RASATI project* (USD 75 million, 2010-2015)<sup>4</sup> and the World Bank (WB) funded Education Development Project II (USD 40 million, 5 years)<sup>5</sup> support the ESDP programmes No 1, 3, 4 and 10 while at the same time include some activities towards the gradual implementation of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education drafted '*New Vision of the School*', aligned with the ESDP programme No 5 'Modernisation of School Management'. These initiatives, particularly pertinent to the current project, include strengthening of leadership skills of the school principals and administrative staff, training of parents' councils, support to community engagement, creation of a 'Lebanon School Improvement Network', development of school improvement plans and a seed school innovation fund;
  - United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have provided approximately USD 6.5 million for pilot initiatives and the expertise of the ESDS;
  - Grant in support to the 5-year plan of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education funded by France for the period 2011-2014;
  - Agence Française de Développement (AFD) (EUR 30 million) is negotiating a new project with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education focusing on the French instruction and school infrastructure.
2. Initiatives in support of VTE:
  - EU-funded *Education/Employment* project (EUR 5 million, 2006-2011) supported the creation of the Agro-Food Technical Institute (a private-public model);
  - German-funded support to the DSME programme (EUR 12 million, GIZ, 2007-2014);
  - European Training Foundation initiatives, including the Torino Process and support projects for the National Qualification Framework, entrepreneurial learning, and career guidance.
3. Selected EU-funded projects with civil society:

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<sup>4</sup> D-RASATI project: A United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded project aiming to rehabilitate schools, equip science and informatics laboratories, develop capacity of teachers and involve parents and pupils in school activities.

<sup>5</sup> *Education Development Project II*: A World Bank loan focused on kindergartens and development of administrative capacities of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education cadres and school principals.

- *Renforcement de l'intégration socio-économique d'enfants et de jeunes en difficulté (Mouvement Social Libanais)* addressing school wastage and citizenship education through school-based projects and work with municipalities;
- Accelerated Vocational Training Programme for reintegration of drop-outs.

#### 2.4. Donor co-ordination

Donor interventions in the education field have in practice adopted a sector approach, based on the ESDP strategic framework. As agreed, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education should ensure systemic donor co-ordination, however, for the moment only quarterly reports on the progress of the ESDP implementation (including the progress of donor-funded initiatives) are being circulated. That is why the major donors and UN agencies, i.e. EU, USAID, WB, AFD, UNICEF, UNESCO – have established a donor co-ordination group on education which has a rotating presidency and takes place on quarterly basis. Furthermore, there is close co-ordination of donors during formulation stages of projects (shared meetings, shared formulation reports and documents).

### 3. DESCRIPTION

The proposed project entitled 'CLOSER: Community and labour oriented scheme for education reform' sets out to complement the top-down centre-led approach adopted by the previous EU-funded projects<sup>6</sup> with support to school-based and labour market-based initiatives. In so doing, CLOSER project will contribute to bridging the gap between the decision-makers and the sector practitioners and beneficiaries, thus complementing (not countering) the on-going reforms led by the ESDS and DGVTE. Furthermore, CLOSER project proposes to strengthen the education and VTE information base and the culture of consultation and transparency which in turn will impact on the quality of education services.

The adopted approach is aligned with the *Evaluation of the European Commission support to education sector* which urges to increase focus on quality improvements and on the Non-State Actors' watchdog role, the Joint Communication of the European Commission and of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy '*A Partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean*'<sup>7</sup> which emphasises the need for civil society involvement and for job-oriented vocational training, and with the principles of the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions '*Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change*'<sup>8</sup> which calls for inclusiveness of education and job-related actions. Equally, the project resonates with national priorities established in the *2011 Ministerial Declaration of the Lebanese government* that calls for faster progress of the reforms in the education sector.

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<sup>6</sup> Namely, Support to Education and PFM Reforms and Education/Employment Project.

<sup>7</sup> COM(2011)200 of 8 March 2011.

<sup>8</sup> COM(2011)637 of 13 October 2011.

### 3.1. Objectives

Overall objective: To improve the quality and relevance of teaching and learning at the Lebanese public schools and vocational training institutes.

The specific objectives are:

- To create the conditions, capacities and supportive environment at the level of schools which would facilitate school-oriented, evidence-based and transparent implementation of the Education Sector Development Plan at the school level.
- To increase the level of responsiveness of the public VTE system to the needs of the labour market.

### 3.2. Expected results and main activities

The programme is articulated in two components:

#### **Component I: Support to ESDP Implementation**

Component I will foster the institutional conditions and capacities and transparency and accountability at the school level. In so doing, it will prepare the school environment for the implementation of the reforms and contribute to the increasing role of the schools in decision-making and project initiation as foreseen in the ESDP programme number 5 '*Modernisation of School Management*'. Thematically, the focus will be on the ESDP programmes 2 and 7 (Retention/Achievement and Citizenship Education) which are already being supported by the EU in the scope of the project '*Support to Education and PFM Reforms*'.

#### **Sub-component I.a: Community-Owned Reform of Education (CORE)**

Result 1: School-based groups involving community actors are mobilised in at least 100 schools, and their capacity to take the leading role in the initiatives for improved retention/achievement and citizenship education is enhanced.

In alignment with the '*New Vision of the School*' and in close co-ordination with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, a network of at least 100 school-based education development groups is fostered (the CORE network) and coached through the process of planning, prioritising, fundraising for and managing of local educational development projects, thus creating the necessary mechanism and capacities to implement the reforms outlined in ESDP at the school level. The following key activities are foreseen:

- Mobilisation of 100 school-based education development groups (led by the Principals and including representatives of the Parent Councils, municipalities, civil society organisations) and initiation of their network, the CORE network;
- Development of a 'Toolbox' and coaching of the CORE members in the elaboration of school development plans, prioritisation, consultation, fundraising;
- Implementation of initiatives of the CORE members corresponding to the national ESDP priority programmes No 2 and 7;
- Exchanges between the individual CORE members (innovative approaches, such as positive deviance and peer coaching, will be examined and piloted).

Result 2: Accountability and transparency of the ESDP reform programmes and associated aid-funded projects at the school level are strengthened.

In order to maximise the efficiency of the CORE component, it will be reinforced by an accountability mechanism integral to the CORE network which will assist the public education authorities, local education officers (i.e. administrators at Regional Education Bureaus and school principals) and visiting executives (i.e. inspectors, orientation counsellors, teacher trainers from the regional Teacher Resource Centres) to better monitor its efficiency and to enhance its transparency and accountability.

The foreseen activities are:

- Set-up of the CORE network social accountability/watchdog function, promoting information dissemination and addressing issues such as budget execution, monitoring, communication, social participation;
- Assessments of and trainings on accountability tools;
- Set-up of an 'upstream' mechanism for the disseminating of results/experiences of the CORE network to the central level.

### **Sub-component I.b: Education scheme 'RESEARCH'**

Result 3: The information base on educational situation, trends and perspectives is consolidated and enriched by new methods in school-based research.

In order to support the culture of evidence-based planning and prioritisation, this sub-component reinforces the government-sponsored (both at central and school level) and privately-initiated education research. The focus will be predominantly on school-based research and promotion of new methodologies (e.g. action research). The strategic alignment with the ESDP programmes 2, 5, and 7, exchanges and synergies between the government and private research, dissemination of results will also be supported.

A scheme entitled 'RESEARCH', will be established to carry out the following activities:

- Set up of a Data Bank collecting reform-related research results, including data on school-based projects (CERD to be in charge of its operations, dissemination of contents and maintenance);
- 3 annual conferences on reform-related education research;
- 12-15 school-based experimental research actions, exploring the local variables of the ESDP programmes and including research on positive deviance;
- Capacity-building in grass-root, participatory methods and instruments (e.g. action research) for selected government staff, academicians and young researchers.

### **Component II: Practice-oriented VTE**

Component II will promote the practice-orientation of VTE by quality enhancement and consolidation of the current DSME programme, while at the same time encouraging the introduction of a strategic shift towards practice-orientation (work-based learning) in the mainstream VTE system.

Result 4: The quality of the DSME programme is enhanced.

This strand will strengthen the quality of training and learning in the current DSME programme, providing for its consolidation and sustainability. The focus will be on capacity-development through coaching of the delivery staff and key actors of the DSME (i.e. school co-ordinators, school directors, trainers, instructors, mentors and quality controllers, employer organisations, VTE administration dealing with quality

issues; the further involvement of the National Employment Office will be also explored).

The foreseen activities are:

- Development and implementation of a Quality Framework;
- Establishment of 'light co-operation mechanisms' between VTE and business sector;
- Capacity-development on practical training, management and monitoring.

Result 5: The information base for DSME programme and other forms of practice-oriented vocational learning in Lebanon is improved.

In order to provide a sound basis for evidence-based policies, analytical work will be carried out on 1) the employment and learning outcomes of DSME programme and other forms of practice-oriented VTE in Lebanon and 2) potential and feasibility for future expansion of the programme. Studies are foreseen to include a sector training needs analysis on future demand, a feasibility study on selected sectors and occupational areas, a comparative school-to-work transition survey for graduates, a comparative measurement of VTE competences of students.

Result 6: Practice-orientation is promoted in mainstream VTE in Lebanon

Based on the outcomes of the above analytical work and the commitment of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and DGVTE to engage in this process, a two-pronged scheme will be developed in order to 1) increase the attractiveness of VTE to young people and 2) enhance the students' exposure to real work situations. The activities may include:

- Promotion and pilot testing of the various practice-oriented modules to the VTE mainstream school (e.g. virtual firms, short placements, job shadowing);
- A communication and awareness-raising campaign on the benefits of practice-oriented VTE;
- Development of a career information system to inform students about a wide range of choices and tackle stereotypes about VTE;
- Fostering of the existing practice-oriented VTE schools, e.g. the Agro-Food Technical Institute (Qab Elias);
- Piloting of the DSME programme in at least one new occupational field.

### **3.3. Risks and assumptions**

The main assumptions of the project are:

- Political stability and the upholding of the current strategic direction of the reforms;
- Ministry of Education and Higher Education/CERD/DGVTE commitment (and appropriate support) to the project.

Risks specific for **Component I:**

- Lack of collaboration/partnership between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and non-governmental project partners;
- Lack of commitment of the Municipal Councils due to huge competition of priorities;
- Little administrative capacity of research partners, municipalities, some NGO partners;



- Co-ordination and quality assurance of the CORE network initiatives;
- Lack of monitoring & evaluation culture in the institutions/organisations involved;
- The 'Watchdog' function may be seen as a threat by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education;
- Complexity of co-ordination of parallel 'bottom-up' and central reform actions risking the loss of coherence.

#### Risks specific for **Component II**:

- Low demand from students due to poor image of VTE in general;
- Capacity-development approach is challenged by DGVTE or other partners;
- Resistance to collaboration between the DGVTE and the private sector;
- Low capacity/demand of Lebanese small and medium enterprises to engage further in the process.

In order to mitigate the risks inherent to the innovativeness of the approach adopted for the component I, it has been decided to provide only a limited budget to this action. Specific mitigation measures for the individual risk factors above will be built-in the project documents.

### 3.4. **Crosscutting Issues**

The themes of human rights, rights of the child, social inclusion, and gender equality are central to both dropout prevention and citizenship education. The proposed project thus not only includes but serves as a vehicle for promoting these cross-cutting issues. Supporting citizenship education further contributes to democracy, as well as prevention of potential conflicts, while support to the VTE promotes employment and social inclusion.

The participatory and capacity-development methodologies adopted by this project promote democratic principles and contribute towards good governance.

### 3.5. **Stakeholders**

The **final beneficiaries** of this project are the students of the Lebanese public-schools and VTE institutes.

The main **stakeholders** of the project are:

- The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Directorate General for Education and ESDS, DGVTE): providing a policy and legal framework and being an indirect beneficiary of the project activities;
- CERD: beneficiary of the support to research capacities;
- Lebanese educationalists and research community;
- Municipalities and civil society organisations;
- Business community or associations and social partners – trade unions and in particular employers' associations;
- School principals and school-based structures (parents associations and school councils).

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

### 4.1. Method of implementation

The project will be implemented in direct centralised management. A Financing Agreement will be signed with the Government of Lebanon.

Both project components will be implemented through grants and/or service contracts.

### 4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

#### 1) Contracts

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question.

Participation in the award of contracts for the present action shall be open to all natural and legal persons covered by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) Regulation. Further extensions of this participation to other natural and legal persons by the concerned authorising officer shall be subject to the conditions provided for in Article 21(7) of the ENPI Regulation.

#### 2) Specific rules for grants

The essential selection and award criteria for the award of grants are laid down in the Practical Guide to contract procedures for EU external actions. They are established in accordance with the principles set out in Title VI 'Grants' of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the EU. When derogations to these principles are applied, they shall be justified, in particular in the following cases:

- Financing in full (derogation to the principle of co-financing): the maximum possible rate of co-financing for grants is 80% of the total eligible costs for the Action. Full financing may only be applied in the cases provided for in Article 253 of the Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the EU.

### 4.3. Indicative budget and calendar

The overall indicative budget amounts to EUR 8 million, indicatively distributed as follows:

	<b>EU contribution (EUR)</b>	<b>Foreseen Modality</b>
Component I: Support to ESDP Implementation (CORE, Research)	4,250,000	Grants Services
Component II: Practice-oriented VTE	3,000,000	Grant Services
Evaluation and Audit	250,000	Services
Contingencies*	500,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,000,000</b>	

\*Use of contingencies is the subject to prior approval of the European Commission

Visibility costs are included in the budget of each component.

The operational implementation period of the action is foreseen for 48 months as from the signature of Financing Agreement.

#### **4.4. Performance monitoring**

Achievements will be monitored internally by the grant holders and service providers (expected to be NGOs or academic institutions). The results will be reported to the EU Delegation in intervals specified in the General Conditions of the relevant type of contract. The key performance indicators will be detailed in every contract. The EU Delegation task manager will carry out at least one monitoring mission a year for each component. It is expected that the individual components will also be subject to the regular result oriented monitoring missions.

#### **4.5. Evaluation and audit**

A mid-term and final evaluation will be carried out for each component.

Expenditure verification will be performed for every grant and service contract as foreseen in the General Conditions for the relevant contracting modality (grant/service).

The total of EUR 250,000 is earmarked for these purposes.

#### **4.6. Communication and visibility**

Adequate communication and visibility will be ensured by a) annual visibility/communication plans which will have a specific budget allocation in each grant contract and b) EU Delegation monitoring of the adherence to the visibility/communication plans.