



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON

Head of Delegation

Beirut,

H. E. Mr. Hans Peter VAN DER WOUDE
Ambassador
Embassy of the Netherlands
Lebanon

Subject: Call for Expression of Interest to EU Member States Organisations for Indirect management cooperation in the field of Women’s empowerment in Lebanon

Dear Ambassador,

The 2021 Joint Communication on a “*Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood - A new Agenda for the Mediterranean*”¹ underlines the importance to give special attention to the promotion of the role of women in society and the economy as part of a renewed commitment to the rule of law, human and fundamental rights, equality, democracy and good governance. In line with EU external and internal policy areas set under the Gender Action Plan (GAP) III which scales up the EU contribution to reach SDG 5² in all EU internal and external policy areas and across the 2030 Agenda, the European Commission has adopted in 2022 the Action “*Women Empowerment Hub in Lebanon (WE HUB)*” financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)³. The action, with a budget of EUR 6,000,000, aims to promote the advancement and empowerment of women for effective realisation of gender equality. More specifically, it seeks to:

1. Increase women’s leadership and participation in political and public sphere;
2. Foster an enabling environment for better engagement of women in the workforce;
3. Enhance key legislative reform and measures that protect women from all forms of violence.

Against this background, the European Union Delegation in Lebanon is launching a call for expression of interest to eligible EU Member States organisations for indirect management cooperation to implement the action “*Women Empowerment Hub in Lebanon (WE Hub)*”. We shall be grateful **if you could forward this call to pillar assessed entities in your country** working on promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment in your country.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=JOIN%3A2021%3A2%3AFIN>

² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

³ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/commission-implementing-decision-7122022-financing-annual-action-plan-favour-lebanon-2022_en

1. Policy context

The EU has committed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals both in its internal and external policies. In November 2020, the the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy put forward the European Union Gender Action Plan (GAP) III⁴, an ambitious plan to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through all external action.

Equality of civil and political rights for citizens are constitutionally recognised in Lebanon. In order to promote equal treatment among its citizens, the Lebanese state signed and ratified the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* in 1997, which lays out women's political, social, economic and civil rights, and stipulates non-discrimination and equality. On some of the CEDAW articles Lebanon has maintained a reservation, particularly on those regarding inequality in access to divorce, child custody, and inheritance, and property rights. In Lebanon, these aspects are governed through personal status laws⁵ that emanate from a confessional and patriarchal system, thus rendering it challenging to harmonize laws and practices pertaining to issues related to gender equality. Lebanon witnessed a number of legal achievements in the past decade, including the passing of a law criminalising sexual harassment in the workplace, amending the 2014 domestic violence law, and approving the 2021 resolution of the Supreme Islamic Sharia Council raising the minimum age for marriage to 18 for Sunni girls. However, Lebanese women are still far from enjoying rights and freedoms on a basis of equal treatment with men. In the last periodic meeting of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) committee⁶, appeals were made to the government of Lebanon for implementing the legal obligations under CEDAW and to continue harmonising laws and practices pertaining to issues related to gender equality. Discrimination and inequality preventing women from engaging across the political, public and economic sphere and being protected from violence are briefly described in the Action Document.

In this context, the European Commission has allocated funding to enhance gender equality in Lebanon in support of the implementation of the “*EU’s Gender Action Plan III (GAP III)*”, Through GAP III, the European Union has committed to include gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment as a significant objective or as a principal objective by 2025⁷ in at least 85% of all new external actions⁸. Moreover, the action will support mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment in the three priorities of the *EU-Lebanon Multi-Annual Indicative Programme -2121-2027 (MIP)* based on the guidance provided by the “*Country Level*

⁴ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/gender-action-plan-iii-towards-gender-equal-world_en

⁵ Personal status laws are religious laws that govern women’s basic human rights in terms of custody, marriage, divorce and inheritance

⁶ Entrusted to monitor the progress in the implementation of national measures for women’s rights made in countries that are signatory of the Convention (February 2021)

⁷ Responding to the G2 score of the OECD policy marker. See note 21.

⁸ GAP III applies the DAC gender equality scoring system. *Significant (marked 1)* means that gender equality is an important objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the action, while *principal (marked 2)* means that gender equality is the main objective.

Implementation Plan 2021-2025⁹ for Lebanon”. The funding will contribute to a) increasing women’s leadership and participation in political and public sphere b) promoting their economic and social rights for better engagement of women in the workforce and c) enhancing key legislative reform and measures that improve human rights protect women from all forms of violence.

2. Implementation method

The implementation method foreseen is indirect management cooperation with one or several pillar assessed EU Member States organisations. **We encourage indeed EU Member States to team up with other EU Member State(s) in the implementation of the action “Women Empowerment Hub in Lebanon (see more details in ‘Next Steps’) and to develop partnership with other pillar-assessed specialised agencies and international organisations.**

Implementation will entail the management and implementation of all aspects of the EU funded action, including procurement and grant award procedures as relevant, to achieve the objectives of the action.

The Action will be financed in full by the European Union and shall last between 42 and 48 months. The contract shall be signed no later than 15th November 2023 and the Action may start on the 1st of December of 2023 or on the 1st of January 2024.

The pillar assessed entity (-ies) will be selected by European Union Delegation in Lebanon, using four criteria, described in the § 4.3.1 of the Action Document, i.e. Specific expertise; Logistical and management capacities; Experience in the country; Neutrality / security reasons.

3. Objectives and outputs

The Overall Objective of this action is to promote advancement and empowerment of women for effective realisation of gender equality in Lebanon. Its expected outcomes are:

1. Increased women’s leadership and participation in political and public spheres
2. Enabled environment for better engagement of women in the workforce
3. Enhanced key legislative reform and measures that protect women from all forms of violence

All the outputs of the Action are described in the § 3.1 of the Action Document.(Annex 3 of C(2022)9309 Commission implementing Decision- ([Vista link](#))

Application

An application for this Call for Expressions of Interest should be sent to address the following questions (2 to 3 pages, free format). In case of consortium, it should explain how the consortium meets the criteria ensuring to describe the contribution of each organisation.

Eligibility

⁹ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/eu-gender-action-plan-iii_en

1. Is your organisation a pillar-assessed Member State Organisation¹⁰

Specific sector / thematic expertise

Demonstrated technical and managerial capacities in working on taking forward political, economic and social empowerment of women in the country as needed.

2. Does your organisation have specific technical sector/thematic expertise in working on taking forward political, economic and social empowerment of women in Lebanon. Please describe the most recent (not older than 1 January 2016) and relevant examples in this regard mainly demonstrating a track record of engagement in promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) **at policy level** in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and in enlargement countries. Experience in Lebanon will be considered an asset.

Logistical and management capacities

Adequate capacities in terms of human resources, organisational set-up to engage with a variety of Lebanese stakeholders working in the area of women's empowerment and rights in Lebanon.

3. Does your organisation have the relevant presence on the ground in the Middle East? Longstanding physical presence in Lebanon will be considered an asset. Well established partnerships with relevant Lebanese organisations will also be considered an asset; additional information on the duration and scope of the partnerships should be provided.
4. Does your organisation have the logistical, financial and management capacities to implement an action of the foreseen size (budget of EUR 6,000,000)? Does your organisation have the capacity (e.g. in terms of human resources, organisational set-up) to collect data, analyse it and report on results? Please provide details to this end.

Neutrality / security reasons:

Proven neutrality with all actors in Lebanon across the political spectrum and civil society.

5. Please explain the importance of neutrality for the purpose of this Action and how you would address this aspect during the inception phase of the programme.

¹⁰ Financial Regulation (FR) No 2018/1046 includes provisions concerning indirect management, which entered into force on 2 August 2018. In accordance with these provisions, the Commission can entrust budget implementation tasks to entities that demonstrate a level of financial management and protection of the EU's financial interest equivalent to that of the Commission. This is verified by carrying out an ex-ante assessment, a Pillar Assessment (PA) of the entity. The FR also ensures that existing pillar assessments continue to apply until they are revised (Art. 279.3). *The Commission shall, in accordance with the principle of proportionality and with due consideration for the nature of the action and the financial risks involved, assess that persons and entities implementing Union funds pursuant to point (c) of the first subparagraph of Article 62(1): (a) set up and ensure the functioning of an effective and efficient internal control system based on international best practices and allowing in particular to prevent, detect and correct irregularities and fraud; (b) use an accounting system that provides accurate, complete and reliable information in a timely manner; (c) are subject to an independent external audit, performed in accordance with internationally accepted auditing standards by an audit service functionally independent of the person or entity concerned; (d) apply appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties, including transparent, non-discriminatory, efficient and effective review procedures, rules for recovering funds unduly paid and rules for excluding from access to funding; (e) make public adequate information on their recipients equivalent to that provided for under Article 38; (f) ensure protection of personal data equivalent to that referred to in Article 5. In addition, in agreement with the persons or entities concerned, the Commission may assess other rules and procedures such as the costs of administering the accounting practices of the persons or entities. On the basis of the results of that assessment, the Commission may decide to rely on those rules and procedures. Persons or entities which have been assessed in accordance with the first and second subparagraphs shall inform the Commission without undue delay if any substantive changes are made to their systems, rules or procedures which may impact the reliability of the Commission's assessment.*

Selection criteria

This action may be implemented in indirect management with a pillar-assessed entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services, upon recommendation of the EU Delegation in Lebanon, using the four aforementioned criteria, i.e. specific expertise, logistical and management capacities, neutrality / security reasons.

Experience in Lebanon will be considered a **main** asset. Application from a consortium of organisation will be considered a **primary** asset. Other assets identified in the previous paragraph are **secondary** assets.

Next steps

The **deadline for the submission** of expressions of interest under this call, stating the organisations interest to participate in this initiative is **19 June 2023, 17:30 Beirut time**. Should you be interested in leading the implementation of this programme, please send your expression of interest signed by the relevant authorising officer (in pdf format), stating in subject: **Call for expression of interest - Women Empowerment Hub in Lebanon (WE HUB)**, to the following e-mail address: delegation-Lebanon@eeas.europa.eu and copy Mr. Olivier BOUDART, Team Leader, (olivier.boudart@eeas.europa.eu) and Roula ABBAS, Programme Manager (roula.abbas@eeas.europa.eu).

Selected entities will be informed the first week of July 2023 at the latest and be requested to submit a full proposal at the latest by **5 September 2023**.

We look forward to receiving your expression of interest for this important work.

Yours sincerely,

E-signed

Martin Lassen Skyly on behalf of

Ralph Tarraf
Ambassador