The magnitude of humanitarian needs is overwhelming in Syria. The Syrian population is highly vulnerable with 13 million of people in need; 6.1 million people had to flee their homes in addition to 4.8 million Syrians who are refugees in neighbouring countries.

The European Union and its Member States are collectively lead providers of international aid. More than **€9.4 billion has been mobilised for humanitarian, stabilisation and resilience assistance** to support Syrians inside the country and in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. A further **€3.7 billion for 2017** have been pledged together by the EU and its Member States at the Brussels conference in April 2017.

The European Commission is funding humanitarian programmes implemented by its humanitarian partners who **provide millions of people with principled humanitarian assistance** including health, protection, food, safe drinking water, non-food items, shelter and emergency medical treatments.

The EU welcomes all efforts to decrease the level of violence in Syria, and calls for continued unhindered and unconditioned access country wide, to all people in need wherever they are.
Humanitarian situation and needs

In September 2017, the conflict continues in many areas of Syria. While a reduction of violence is reported in some areas since the May 4th memorandum on de-escalation areas, the humanitarian and protection situation remains extremely difficult and the needs are overwhelming.

The Syrian population is highly vulnerable with 13 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Of these, 6.1 million are internally displaced and 3.4 million live in hard-to-reach and besieged areas. Children and young people comprise more than half of the displaced population. Civilians continue to be the primary victims of the conflict. Rape and sexual violence, enforced disappearances, forcible displacement, recruitment of child soldiers, executions and deliberate targeting of civilian places and infrastructure, have become commonplace.

In besieged and hard to reach areas in Eastern Ghouta and Idleb, military operations and fighting among armed groups have continued, causing death of the civilians. The situation in non-state armed groups-held areas of north-western Syria remains extremely worrying, particularly given the high level of needs, with some one million displaced people living in the area, including many from formerly besieged areas. In view of difficulties in access, cross-border assistance is increasingly important.

Military operations continue in Raqqa and Deir Ez Zor governorate. Intense clashes over the cities of Raqqa and Deir Ez Zor trigger new needs. Heavy fighting and airstrikes resulted in civilian casualties and injuries. Large-scale displacement also continues to be recorded. In Raqqa governorate, since November last year, over 271 000 men, women and children have been displaced from their homes.

According to INGOs reports, between 15 000 to 20 000 civilians still remain trapped in the city and are increasingly exposed to the crossfire of the ongoing fighting.

Protection issues remain of high concern: detention is reportedly still a risk for many IDPs staying in different temporary sites, with risk of large presence of munitions and unexploded bombs in public places and residential areas. Besides, lack of civil documentation, family separation, limitations to the freedom of movement, widespread traumatisation and high prevalence of persons with special needs are also of important protection concerns.

Major challenges

The magnitude of humanitarian needs is overwhelming in all parts of Syria. The main priorities are treating the wounded and sick, providing food aid, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter. Prices of basic commodities have been rising and the availability of food stocks in many parts of Syria is at risk. Shelter needs are prevalent with more than 11 million people having fled their homes.

In the area of health, the long-lasting consequences of the conflict include shortages of qualified medical personnel and life-saving medicines as well as the destruction of health infrastructure, leaving many without access to basic medical care. Medical facilities have been targeted by aerial bombardments, resulting in fatalities and destruction of facilities. Impeding the delivery of essential medical supplies, equipment and treatment has been used as a weapon of war.

In terms of access, at the end July humanitarian convoys reached hard to reach areas in Al Derkhabia and Zakia and for the first time the besieged town of Nashabiyeh in Eastern Ghouta, Rural Damascus. In September, UN convoys reached the besieged city of Der Ezor. However, access remains a key challenge to delivering assistance to the 3.4 million people in hard-to-reach areas, including more than 400 000 in besieged locations. In 2017, the UN assistance reached only 39% of the people in need in besieged area and the 13.3% of the people in need in hard to reach areas. The obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance reported by humanitarian actors are the lack of administrative approvals and facilitation letters, insecurity and fighting, arbitrary restrictions by armed groups, UN Security Council listed terrorist groups, and self-designated local authorities.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

The C445 million EU humanitarian assistance to the Syria crisis for 2016, as well as the allocation of C280 million for 2017 (excluding Turkey), will continue addressing the needs inside Syria as well as the needs of Syrian refugees and host communities in neighbouring countries.
Inside Syria, EU humanitarian assistance is responding to emergency crises throughout the country, working from all humanitarian hubs. Almost half of the Commission’s humanitarian assistance goes to immediate life-saving and emergency humanitarian operations. In addition, the assistance includes the provision of safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, provisions of food, child protection activities and emergency items.

At an operational level, the EU has been working tirelessly with humanitarian partners, including the UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International non-governmental organisations, to support the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The EU maintains a strong emergency response capacity of intervention in identified locations inside Syria, such as Idleb, Aleppo and Hama, Rural Damascus and Homs countryside, Raqqa, Deir Ez Zor and Hassakeh as well as in Southern governorates.

The EU has been advocating for the access, protection and assistance to civilians all over Syria and will continue to do so. In March 2017, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy have adopted a joint communication proposing a forward-looking EU strategy for Syria. The EU has been calling upon the whole international community to support the people of Syria as long as it is needed and fill funding gaps. At the Brussels conference on 4-5 April 2017, "Supporting the future of Syria and the region" the international community pledged €5.6 billion in funding to support humanitarian, resilience and development activities in 2017 for the Syria crisis response. The EU is by far the largest donor with a collective pledge of more than €9.4 billion in response to the Syrian crisis since 2011, out of which €1.4 billion is from the EU humanitarian budget.

In Lebanon, EU humanitarian funding has contributed to cash assistance for the most vulnerable refugees, secondary healthcare for lifesaving cases, non-formal education and shelter - including water, hygiene and sanitation - to improve the living conditions of the vulnerable families mostly affected by the displacement. Protection remains a fundamental sector where partners conduct regular monitoring of the main protection concerns and provides awareness, counselling and legal assistance to the refugee population. Since 2012, the EU’s humanitarian aid to Lebanon has reached around 750 000 Syrian refugees. For 2016, EU humanitarian funding amounted to €87 million and €85 million for 2017.

In Jordan, the EU supports the provision of humanitarian assistance to 650 000 Syrian refugees present in the country. The EU supports the most vulnerable refugees through cash assistance and has been partnering with international organisations in several sectors like protection, health, winterization and basic needs. Specific programmes support women and children's needs, since approximately 52% of these refugees are children and 51% are women. In 2017, the €55 million of EU humanitarian funding allocated to Jordan also targeted the emergency needs of more than 45 000 refugees stranded along the north-eastern border.

Since 2016, the EU has allocated €7.8 million to Egypt from the humanitarian budget to target the most in need out of the 122 203 registered Syrian refugees or awaiting registration in the country as of the 31 July (source: UNHCR). The EU supports most refugees living in substandard conditions in urban contexts through protection, health and education in emergency assistance.