

ROAD MAP – JOINT EU PROGRAMMING IN TUNISIA

17 December 2013

1. Overview

As announced in the EU Heads of Mission (HoMs) Report of 6 March 2013 on the possibilities for future joint programming in Tunisia, HoMs in Tunisia unanimously support this initiative.

However, HoMs favour adopting a gradual approach toward the implementation of joint programming given the current political context in Tunisia which remains in a transitional phase until a new Constitution is approved and long delayed legislative elections can be held, possibly in mid-2014. At the time of writing, the current government has pledged to resign as a part of a road map agreed with opposition parties to address the current political crisis and move forward toward future legislative elections. In the interim, a caretaker government of independent figures is foreseen. In this context, it is unlikely that Tunisia will be in a position to establish a longer term national development strategy until a new government emerges from the next elections. HoMs therefore fully agree with the decision to place Tunisia among pilot countries with an implementation target for 2016. This will allow the EU a reasonable timeframe in which to promote a positive partner country government position and buy-in regarding Joint Programming, consult with other stakeholders and lay the groundwork for developing a common vision based on a joint analysis of Tunisia's future national development strategy.

2. Participants

As mentioned in the recent HoMs report, the majority of EU MS do not engage in cooperation activities in Tunisia given that it is considered a medium income country and, as such, is not a priority for development aid. A number of MS have been supporting Tunisia's process of democratic transition following the revolution of 14 January 2011 through specific, targeted activities requiring only small-scale financial support with no substantial funding commitments beyond 2013 or 2014. Moreover, several MS have indicated that their bilateral cooperation activities with Tunisia are based on mutual interest and, as such not subject to EU joint programming.

The main EU donors engaged in long term cooperation programmes with a bilateral cooperation agreement with the Tunisian government include the EU, DE, ES, FR and IT. Of these, ES, FR and IT have expressed a willingness to engage in a joint programming exercise after the 2012-2013 cycle. However, the question of synchronising programming cycles remains open.

3. Immediate Actions

EU HoMs propose to begin the process of joint programming by enhancing coordination in areas of common interest to EU donors in Tunisia in particular in the following areas

- Information exchange between donors in Tunisia, including the World Bank, African Development Bank, the EIB, among others. Mapping of EU donor activities, programming cycles, etc. A review of European donors' future plans and potential sectoral financial allocations would be useful in order to identify potential gaps and overlaps in the future.
- Dialogue with the Government, civil society and the private sector. A reinforced dialogue with the Tunisian government organised by the EU Delegation is essential to ensuring Aid Effectiveness and EU visibility. This will be particularly important following the arrival of a new government in 2014 backed by a popular mandate which can engage in long term planning and development aid strategies with EU donors.
- Promotion of bilateral activities. As proposed in the recent HoMs report, EU MS, in particular those planning to engage in cooperation activities in fields such as democratisation, support to the media, human rights, regional development could benefit from the EU Delegation's experience and participate in relevant EU-funded activities.

4. Subsequent steps

- Common analysis and vision. EU donors should engage with the future Tunisian government following the 2014 legislative elections as early as possible in order to coordinate joint programming with the drafting of a national development plan. A joint review of the plan should then be carried out.
- Division of labour and indicative financial allocations. In general, EU HoMs are satisfied with the current division of labour in Tunisia. However, this assessment should be reviewed once a mapping exercise has been carried out and in light of new opportunities that may emerge from the future government's National Development Strategy and/or key sector plans.
- Approach to other stakeholders. The Tunisian government, other development partners, civil society and the private sector should be kept informed of the joint programming process, sensitised to its implications for them and invited to provide input and opinion at certain points, as appropriate. The Government should be regularly updated on the joint programming progress and should be reminded that the existence of a National Development Plan and key sector plans that adhere to the national cycle are vital for European joint programming to go ahead in practice. Civil society should be asked for input on the overall analysis of the country and where the European response should best focus. The views of the private sector should similarly be sought on relevant issues. This process should take place at an early stage of the joint programming process. Finally, other development partners should be kept updated on progress and invited to provide input and comment on specific content of the joint programming as it is being developed. Exactly what content is opened to such scrutiny should be left to the discretion of European HoCs in Tunis.