



PRESS RELEASE

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Flash audit

FRENCH STATE AID TO LEBANON SINCE 2020

Since 2019, Lebanon's difficulties have been compounded by a multifaceted political, economic, financial, and social crisis. The day after the explosion in the port of Beirut on 5 August 2020, the President of the French Republic expressed the solidarity of the French nation and launched an aid operation that is intended to continue in the long term. The aim was to bring relief to the Lebanese people, by supporting the efforts of non-government organisations, and to help them find a way out of the crisis.

The Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the operators under its authority were quick to take action. At the Ministry, the crisis and support centre responded particularly rapidly, as required by its mission. The French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement, AFD), the Agency for French Teaching Abroad (Agence pour l'Enseignement Français à l'Étranger, AEFÉ) and the United Nations Department at the Quai d'Orsay have also been front-line players. Other stakeholders have also been involved, including the French Treasury.

This commitment from all parties, channelled with great efficiency by the French embassy in Beirut, was appreciated by the Court, which nevertheless experienced difficulty in even collecting the corresponding financial data, let alone consolidating it. In many cases, the urgency of the need for action took precedence over the acquisition of reliable and aggregated figures.

Following in-depth discussions with each of the contributors and participatory workshops to pool the data, the Court was able to establish that by 2020, the annual State appropriations devoted to Lebanon had in total been multiplied by 2.7. Between 2020 and 2022, €214m was spent from public funds.

45% of this aid was devoted to education and training, 25% to health, 10% to food and agriculture, 10% to reconstruction and the economy, and 10% to civil society.

The priority given to education and health has made it possible to help French and French-speaking schools in Lebanon in particular, which are facing difficulties in recruiting pupils and collecting school fees. Health establishments such as the Rafic Hariri Hospital in Beirut, as well

as others throughout the country, have received support to ensure that as many people as possible have access to healthcare.

As the general public is the intended recipient of the aid, the main beneficiaries have not been state organisations, but non-government stakeholders. For example, 72% of the €128 million in aid provided by the French Development Agency (AFD) has gone to NGOs, in stark contrast to the agency's usual operating methods. Major multilateral agencies, such as UNICEF and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, have also been called upon to help.

In order to assess the consistency and effectiveness of France's official aid, measure its impact and obtain the tools needed to direct and, if necessary, redirect action, it is essential to establish permanent mechanisms for consolidating statistics, the lack of which prevented the Court from being able to complete its investigation.


At the end of its work, the Cour of Accounts is therefore issuing a single recommendation: to implement a cross-functional financial monitoring system for the aid provided by the French government to Lebanon, enabling it to be checked for consistency and compliance with the objectives set, assess its impact and provide steering tools.


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