Context and Rationale

Syria’s neighboring countries are hosting the vast majority of people fleeing Syria, and their local governments are at the forefront of the crisis. Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey are hosting some 5 million Syrian refugees and the uncertainty of their return to Syria poses concerns and highlights need of creating a livable environment for both refugees and host communities. After six years of Syrian conflict, the most urgently felt challenges for host countries are to alleviate the existing pressure on services (e.g. housing, electricity, water, local infrastructures, education), and to tackle down unemployment and competition over jobs between locals and Syrians, which can also have serious repercussion on a peaceful coexistence between the two communities. One mean to respond to these challenges is to stimulate entrepreneurship and private investments for the creation of jobs for refugees and locals alike. In this respect, the presence of entrepreneurs can be an important economic opportunity for host countries: they can bring capital, new markets, and know-how creating more jobs, developing a trade network, and contributing to the general local economic attractiveness. However, more efforts need to be addressed for private sector mobilization, such as: infrastructure development, exploitation of the comparative advantage local governments can offer, encouragement of entrepreneurship for Syrians (e.g. through relaxing legal restrictions) and host communities (e.g. through regulations and policies), simplification of regulatory framework for home-based business, and introduction of new financial instruments to attract investments.

In this context, since June 2016 the Mediterranean Host Municipalities Learning Network aims to support municipalities hosting refugees with evidence-based knowledge and to share innovative solutions to improve their response capacity in public service delivery for refugees and the most vulnerable. The Network benefitted from several face-to-face workshops and webinars on priority themes, surveys, as well as online discussions. It will now be supported by a new collaborative online platform which is designed to offer a privileged space for municipalities hosting refugees to exchange and learn from each other’s experiences and best practices on a continuous basis, and build collaborations. The Host Municipalities Network is moderated by the Center for Mediterranean Integration, as part of the Mediterranean Refugees and Host Communities Program.

Objective and Webinar Structure

Following the outcomes of the Host Municipalities Network’s Workshop on Local Economic Development (Beirut, May 9-12th 2017), and building on the network’s learning requests, this Webinar will discuss main challenges and solutions for supporting the business of both Syrian refugees and host communities at the local level. Furthermore, it will also officially present and launch the new online platform of the Host Municipalities Network, using the Collaboration for Development (C4D) tool.
Main objectives of the 2.5-hours Webinar are:

- To strengthen knowledge and learning exchange between local government representatives and private investors on how to better mobilize the private sector for job creation;
- To identify good experiences and lessons learned for their improvement or possible replication in municipalities hosting refugees;
- To present and launch the new collaborative platform of the Mediterranean Host Municipalities Learning Network.

The Webinar will explore perspectives of how to better mobilize the private sector from the viewpoints of investors, Municipal representatives, and technical advisors’ inputs followed by an interactive discussion on how to better implement and/or replicate such experiences in contexts of a high refugee influx.

**PARTICIPATION IN THE VIRTUAL WORKSHOP**

The webinar will consist of a virtual exchange allowing participants to interact by connecting to the webinar directly from their computer (links to access the Webex can be found at the bottom of this page; please note that this will require high-speed internet connection). Arabic-English translation will be provided. Videoconference rooms in WB country offices can be reserved upon request.

Please confirm your interest to participate here.
AGENDA

Please note that timings refer to UTC+01 (Central European time). See the table below for further information.

14.00 – 14.10  Opening Remarks and Introduction of Participants
• Ms Janette Uhlmann, Senior Program Officer, CMI
  Feedback from the 2nd Annual Peer Learning Workshop on LED

14.10 – 14.30  Launch of the new Host Municipalities Learning Network C4D online platform
• Ms Sara Boughedir, CMI, and Mr Mohammad Zawahreh, Zarqa Municipality, Jordan
  Joint Presentation of C4D Platform
• Feedback from Network members

14.30 – 15.20  Private Sector Mobilization for Municipalities Hosting Refugees
• Mr Rami Sharrack, Syrian Economic Forum, Turkey
  An investor’s perspective: expectations from and benefits for host municipalities
• Mr Mohammad Al Sarhan, Sarhan Municipality, Jordan
  A municipal perspective on attracting private investments for local growth
• Mr John Speakman, Advisor, World Bank
  A technical input on private sector mobilization in the Mashreq Region

15.20 – 16.20  Q&A and Moderated Open Discussion
• Discussant: Ms Naila Ahmed, Senior Social Development Specialist, World Bank

16.20 – 16.30  Conclusions and Next Steps
• Ms Janette Uhlmann, Senior Program Officer, CMI

LOCAL STARTING TIMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>LOCAL STARTING TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MARSEILLE</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEIRUT</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMMAN</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTANBUL</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JERUSALEM</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAGHDAD</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASHINGTON D.C.</td>
<td>08.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>