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## **Afghanistan: EU, 140 million for food, health, education, women's rights**

(Brussels) The European Union has decided to release €140 million in aid to support basic needs and livelihoods in the fields of education, health, agriculture and women's economic empowerment in Afghanistan. The decision to release the funds, previously frozen since December 2022 in response to the Taliban's decision to ban women from working in NGOs, "comes after six months of monitoring and assessment of the 'for women by women' principle. This principle - according to a statement from Brussels - ensures that Afghan girls and women are involved in all aspects of the aid delivery chain". The EU funds to the country, abandoned to itself after the withdrawal of the EU and US armed forces, "will continue to be directed through UN agencies, the World Bank and International Non-Governmental Organisations working on the ground. The financial support aims to provide basic needs assistance to the Afghan people in the wake of the worrying challenges they face in the country". The European Union "is mobilising this funding to support new projects such as the support to a conducive learning environment for both boys and girls, and to improve and incentivise access to school through food assistance. On health, the funds will help with strengthening basic health services, infectious diseases, safe drinking water, improving nutrition amongst children and enhancing household food security". Work will also be carried out on climate resilience and help for the return and reintegration of Afghan refugees coming back from neighbouring countries. EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen said: "We know how difficult it has been to navigate the increasingly severe situation in Afghanistan. Yet, over the last six months the international community has found a way to deliver desperately needed support to women, girls, and other vulnerable groups".

Valentina Bombelli