

# EXPLAINER

## ■ The secret of the seventh Roadmap: meet [ERMI](#)

The Executive Roadmap is a dynamic, consultative and collaborative undertaking that documents solutions and bundles of measures which are seen as answers to Lebanon's economic and structural woes by committed residents from many walks of life. To the best of the editors' knowledge, the Roadmap is the longest-running, often relayed on or copied, and most crowd-sourced economic plan under publication in Lebanon. It also is distinct in its origins and character from rescue plans that were conceived in public sector, business community and civil society contexts of the country's acute economic crisis in the past four years. As such, the Roadmap is a testimony to the will of the people beyond any political affiliations. It is a permanent draft that is in its seventh annual iteration, thus in its pdf iteration marked as Draft 7.0.

At the same time, Draft 7 marks the entry into Executive Roadmap's third phase of iteration and development. This new phase is externally determined on one hand by the national circumstances that entail more severe external threats and internal dangers – but also new economic and social impulses that highlight the potential for restructuring and rebooting what Executive codifies as economic democracy. On the other hand, the new phase of RM iteration represents a significant editorial effort of making the Roadmap Drafts more accessible, visual, and indeed inviting to new stakeholders aspiring to share in the shaping of Lebanon's fortunes.

To this end, the Executive Roadmap is now garbed in fancy digital attire. The visual representation and navigation have been redesigned

from scratch. Its 390 recommendations have been condensed and aligned in style to be sharper, under the intent of serving as content platform in workshops, roundtables, and new interaction formats where Executive will in this year and henceforth be inviting contributions and debate. When compared side by side with the 7.0 pdf version, the [Executive Economic RoadMap Interactive](#), or ERMI, are one in spirit and fully aligned in content but distinct in appearance and nuance.

### THREE PHASES OF ROADMAP EVOLUTION

Induced by years of observing and analyzing administrative and political deficiencies that have been widening instead of being resolved, and of social and economic pathways that were directed at walls and cliffs instead of sustainable solutions and stairways to greater prosperity, the Executive Roadmap to save Lebanon was first prepared in the second half of 2018 and published in December of that year as a substantive plea for implementation of reforms and creation of efficiencies.

In the earliest iteration, direct consultations with stakeholders as well as the archive of Executive informed Draft 1.0's formation with analysis pieces, industry reports,

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business features, interviews, expert comments, by-invitation op-eds, and editorials. Extracted from a loose list and organized into four pillars (Build & Reform; Strategize; Combat; and Develop), the aggregate of the magazine's stakeholder contributions and insights was translated into an actionable document of 16 Policy Priorities laid out on 48 pages. Three internal and twelve external stakeholders were listed on the masthead of Draft 1.0.

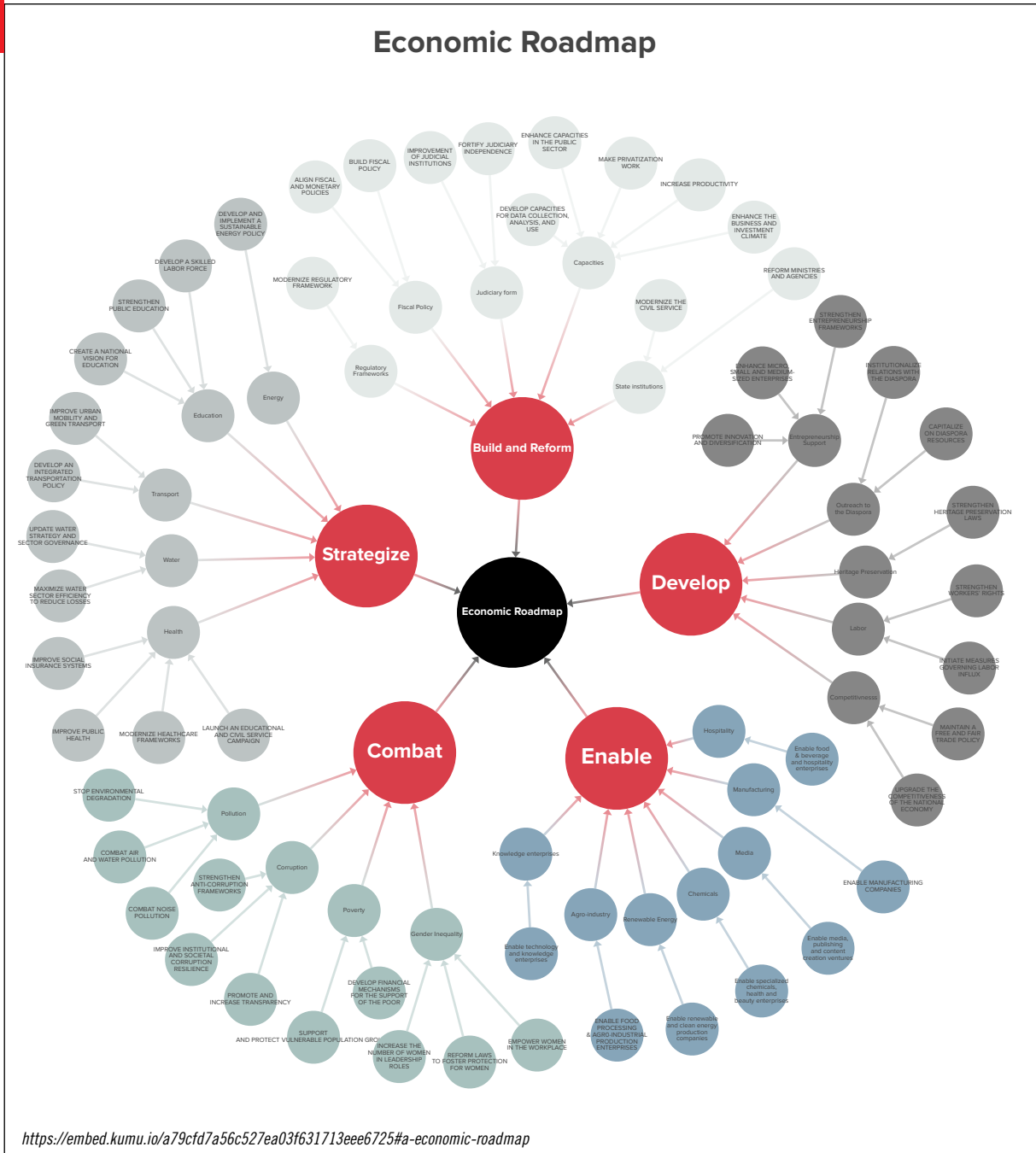
The mindset of Executive editors at this moment in time, expressed in the Facts & Figures 2017-18 end-of-year issue, was deeply concerned, but still hopeful. The issue's Economy & Policy overview piece warned "The Lebanese state has no plan for where to take the country economically in 2018 and beyond."

It can thus in hindsight be said that the first steps of the structured Roadmap process, while yielding Draft 1.0, were embedded in an increasingly uneasy calm, the relative peace of the status quo ante that lulled Lebanon in the entire post-conflict reconstruction and development period of the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. In the months following publication of Draft 1.0, the country was still engulfed in deceptive calm (while the July 2019 issue of Executive was titled "Breaking Point" and argued that, if Lebanon were a corporation "its management would need to be fired and fired fast", editors continued to emphasize the great value of the financial system and called upon banks "to make every effort they can to be absolutely trustworthy").

But in editors' anticipation of likely deepening social and economic chasms and breakages in the country's integrity, Executive's Roadmap was, in a parallel effort to the regular coverage, materially reviewed and substantially expanded through consultative meetings held with diverse civil society organizations and stake-

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## INTRODUCING ECONOMIC ROADMAP 7.0 INTERACTIVE



holder groups (that in some cases did not even consider themselves being prima facie economic stakeholders). Because of these interactive, on-the-ground consultations, the number of

credited Roadmap contributors multiplied more than sixfold; Draft 2.0, published as a standalone document in spring 2019, introduced 268 newly proposed measures.

A first for Executive in the preparation of Roadmap 3 was an intense cluster of five economic and financial roundtables organized in a downtown Beirut hotel just ahead of national

day 2019. Stepping out of the conference venue and walking less than 50 steps after the successful conclusion of the last roundtable session meant that participants and conveners of the gathering were immersed in one of the most vibrant and enthusiastic Martyrs' Square convocations of civil demands for change. Draft 3.0 was thus informed by the civil thawra at the end of 2019, but was still in many ways an effort of finding ways to avert the tsunami of despair that had been looming higher and higher in the preceding months. The number of credited contributors and stakeholders in the project again rose, almost doubling from Draft 2.0.

### ASPIRATIONS OF RESCUE IN DIRE STRAITS

As the liquidity and banking crisis merged into the structural economic meltdown, the Roadmap process entered its second phase of iteration and became a crisis response and rescue tool. Draft 4.0 sought to help chart the way through the crisis by highlighting proposed emergency measures while attempting to “complement the emerging political will, doctrine, and resolve, which centers Lebanon’s well-being.” Draft 4.0 was presented in print in the “Fight for Hope” December 2020 – January 2021 issue of Executive.

As the immensity of the Lebanese political, economic, and social crisis was building up in 2020, Executive’s Roadmap Drafts went in search of new perspectives and ways forward.

In this overwhelming crisis context it is important to acknowledge that the work on RM Drafts 5.0 and 6.0 was marked by many financial and personnel impediments because of the unexpected mega-crisis exacerbated first by the Covid-19 pandemic and then, of course the Beirut Port explosion of August 4, 2020 unleashed by human failure and criminal political negligence.

Hence, RM Drafts 5.0 and 6.0 saw addition of measures urging fast ac-

tion on issues such as negotiations for an agreement with the International Monetary Fund and provision of vaccines. A noteworthy addition aiming to include private sector productivity and focus was the addition of the Enable pillar, documented in Draft 5.0. This pillar emerged out of consultative roundtable work with international agencies and private sector industry leaders in March 2021.

The Enable pillar consequently covers seven sectors of promise in manufacturing and services. These seven sectors – manufacturing; agro-industry; media and content development; hospitality; knowledge enter-

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prises; specialized chemicals (with utility for health and beauty); and renewable energy – were judged by consulting experts as best positioned for new growth. The number of contributors in Draft 5.0 reached more than 180 while proposed measures culminated at over 360. Draft 6.0 at the start of 2023 reiterated the content of Draft 5.0, adding new accents and shifting emphases.

Ideation of [ERMI](#) started in mid-2023. In the iteration’s design and collation phase, Executive produced a mindfully shortened, more visually appealing and intuitively interactive ERMI and the reference Draft 7.0.

### THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS(ES) OF MANY INNOVATIVE MINDS

As the crisis landscape has shifted to a wider need for integrated regional development and stabilization, the third phase of our Economic Roadmap iterations is upon us in form of ERMI. In preparation for the day after regional instability, phase three denotes the time of joint striving for

a new sovereignty that is realistic, modular and interdependent. In parallel with ERMI, Executive has developed Draft 7.0 as final pdf iteration and reference document containing the longer-form Policy Priority descriptions and proposed measures.

Digitized but not yet fully digital, ERMI offers an abridged Roadmap that condenses lengthy proposed measures and omits some proposed measures that overlap and have been included in more than one pillar and Policy Priority. We also condensed the introductions for each theme and designations of Policy Priorities for easier interaction in ERMI.

ERMI is even more committed than Drafts 1.0 to 7.0 to the stakeholder diversity and consultative approach that is the governing mindset of the Executive Roadmap since day 1. The editorial commitment to continuity of this process is evident in the structure of five verticals (pillars) and 26 topics or Policy Priorities with a total of 52 sub-categories.

The integrity of the Roadmap numbering system has been retained, even where individual measures have been retired from ERMI for reasons of redundancy or inappropriateness in the 2024 timeframe. In short, numerical identifiers of Policy Priorities and proposed measures in reference Draft 7.0 and EMRI are 100 percent the same.

In terms of intended priority audiences, pillars one and two have been compiled with the primary target of serving and inspiring public stakeholders, pillars two and three are designed to appeal civil stakeholders, pillar four and five aim to reverberate with private sector stakeholders. All five pillars, however – and this is the *raison d'être* of moving the Executive Economic Roadmap into expanding interactivity with more and more digital functionalities envisioned for future EMRI iterations – seek to unleash innovative thinking and garner input and debate from all types of mindful stakeholders. ■

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## ■ Forging an economic path to new sovereignty

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Crisis situations are nothing if not an opportunity for change. In this sense acting as a supreme motivating force for change, the economic crisis was expanded by a national security crisis and threat to sovereignty of Lebanon. In the 2023/24 issue of Executive, we explore the magazine's consultative Economic Roadmap under a perspective of building security and ultimately a new expression of sovereignty that is both networked and interdependent, instead of being defined as indivisible and territorial.

Economy is the aspect of a polity that is always in flux. By definition, economy is never at the same

time static and growing. The investigations and inquiries of Executive Magazine over the three years since March 2021 have shown that some sectors of the economy meet the criteria of both serving greater societal need and opening larger economic development potential.

Specializations of economic activity that have these two characteristics of great need and reward included renewable energy and production of food stuffs. Improvements of productivity and output in these sectors will therefore translate into the increase of security for the whole of society. In an additional advantage, meeting societal priority needs for food and energy is acknowledged globally under targets of food security and energy security (see stories contained in this pdf issue that summarize our 2023 findings on these sectors).

The economic crisis of Lebanon

has in this sense spurred on the identification of economic activities with high potential for job creation and market growth. Such potentials for boosting the economy were discovered through stakeholder consultations curated by Executive in manufacturing, hospitality, knowledge and creative industries, tech entrepreneurship, and niches in the real economy such as healthy cosmetics and organic products in food and beauty.

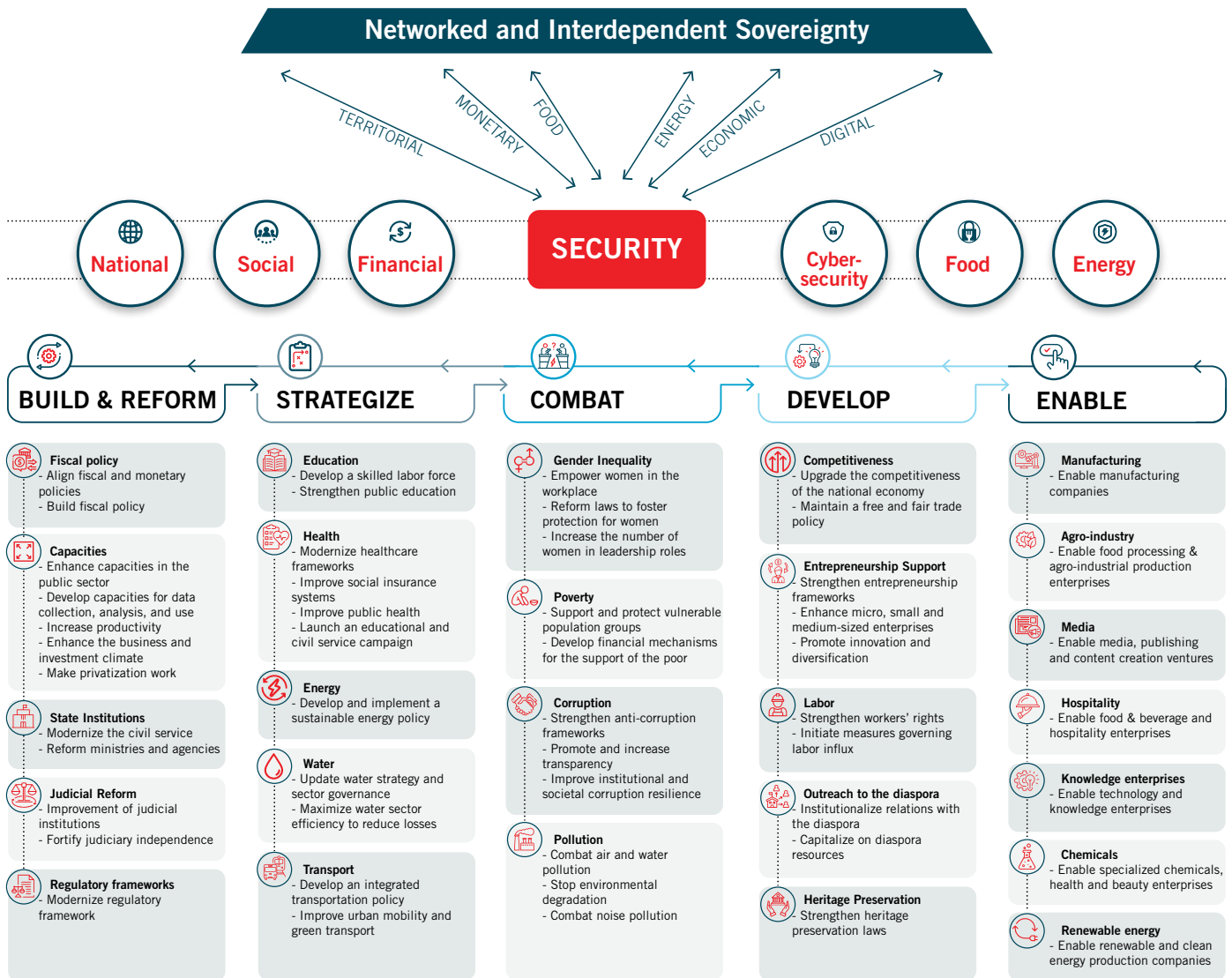
Further priority efforts of private and public sectors are needed for creation and improvement of financial markets and social safety networks, which are curiously interdependent to one another in the respective assurances of social security and financial security (see special report in issue 270 and dollarization comment on page 28).

A new aspect of security needs is cybersecurity, which is the meet-

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ing defense needs of an increasingly digital society and in many ways is the equivalent of national security in the physical territory of a country. The importance of addressing those two security needs has been heightened immensely and the value of national security has been put in sharp relief by events in the last quarter of 2023.

It must be noted, however, that the economic sectors of above stat-

ed potential were not at all times the first focuses of private investment. Neither were they the recipients of incentives by legislators or public sector support. This has to change as much as private and public capacities can facilitate.

A further factor of detriment was made evident through Executive's research, namely that the sectors with the highest job creation potential in the real and the

services economy, and the priority issue of security, are interconnected with national public sector and governmental capacities that have been long and deeply deficient are still not being developed. The implementation of the economic roadmap through private and civic efforts and achievements of its purpose and vision layers cannot be completed without building and reforming the state and its institutions.