

Chapter 2:

The role of the Delegation of the
European Commission in EU-
Syria Cooperation

In May 2000 the European Commission launched an ambitious process of reform of EU external aid aimed at improving the effectiveness of external aid management, the quality of operations and their visibility. Deconcentration of the management of external aid towards the Delegations of the Commission is a key element of the reform. It rests on its basic principle that "all that can better be managed and decided on the spot should not be managed or be decided in Brussels".

In Damascus, deconcentration has been opera-



From right to left: Head of Delegation of European Commission to Syria, Dr. Frank Hesske, Counselor, Mr. Christos Komninos, 1st Secretary, Mr. Jerome Cassiers, 1st Secretary Ms. Fabienne Bessonne, and 2nd Secretary, Mr. Andrea Matteo Fontana welcome the guests on 9th of May, Europe Day.

tional since 4 February 2003. Subsequently, the Delegation is directly responsible for the implementation of a € 149 million portfolio of ongoing projects. For the Delegation, deconcentration has entailed an increase in staff, an upgrade in the IT, and appropriate training for concerned staff.

Since the start of deconcentration, the Delegation follows all stages of the project cycle. It is involved in programming (while line responsibility rests with Headquarters) and the preparation of the National Indicative Programmes. It is responsible for identification and appraisal of new projects foreseen in the National Indicative Programmes (with support by Headquarters). The Delegation provides the input for the presentation by Headquarters of financing proposals to the MED Committee in Brussels and is also responsible for the implementation of ongoing

projects, including contractual and financial responsibilities. Finally, the Delegation is responsible for mid-term and final evaluations of ongoing and completed projects, with methodological back-up from Headquarters.

In 2003, three sections were created in the Delegation dealing directly with deconcentrated projects on a daily basis. Human & Social Development and Economic Co-operation deal with operations, while Finance & Contracts deals with contractual and financial issues as well as audits and controls.

The Human & Social Development section is headed by Ms Fabienne Bessonne, First Secretary, and is composed of six staff. This section manages projects in the areas of education, health, social affairs, culture, tourism, humanitarian aid, human rights and civil society.

The Economic Co-operation section is headed by Mr Andrea Matteo Fontana, Second Secretary, and includes six staff. This section manages projects in the areas of institutional reform, private sector development, finance, infrastructure, water and public utilities.

The Finance & Contracts section is headed by Mr Christos Komninos, Counsellor, who leads a team of six staff. The section analyses and verifies all operations initiated by the two operation sections to ensure that they are in conformity with EU rules and regulations. The section is also responsible for the final approval of payments.

These three sections make up the Delegation cooperation team and work together in implementing the EU-Syria cooperation programme -most importantly the projects foreseen in the National Indicative Programmes. The three sections advise the Head of Delegation on all issues pertaining to EU-Syria cooperation.