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European Neighbourhood Policy – ISRAEL

EU–Israel relations: basic facts

The EU-Israel Association Agreement entered into force in 2000, replacing an earlier 1975 Cooperation Agreement. It includes free trade arrangements for industrial goods and concessions on trade in agricultural products. An additional agreement deepening mutual concessions in trade in agricultural products entered into force in 2004. The European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan was adopted in April 2005. The third round of sub-committee meetings began in October 2007. An EU-Israel Reflection Group is currently considering areas where relations with the EU might be upgraded to a "special status" which will include both: a deepening of political dialogue and integrating Israel more closely in a number of key EU policies.

Major developments in 2007 and overall assessment

Overall Israel has been an active partner in the framework of the ENP, as demonstrated by the progress made in implementing a large number of priorities of the joint Action Plan. The ENP has clearly played a catalyst role in boosting EU-Israeli relations and the Action Plan has provided the platform to develop more profoundly the cooperation in many fields, from enhanced EU-Israel political dialogue to Israel's involvement in a number of EU initiatives.

Israel is among the front-runners in making use of the new possibilities for ENP partner countries' to participate in Community programmes. It is the first ENP country to participate in the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) which promotes innovation, entrepreneurship and growth of small and medium sized businesses.

A business-to-business dialogue has been established in 2007 between European and Israeli business leaders, designed to strengthen bilateral economic relations, remove trade and investment barriers and enhance investment and joint ventures.

Israel is fully associated to the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development. Over 1,300 proposals involving Israeli researchers were received and 267, were accepted with a Community contribution of over € 51 million.

Israel participates in the GALILEO programme for satellite navigation.

Israeli students already participate in the Erasmus Mundus exchange programme (an increase of over 70% in 2007/2008 over the previous period) and will be able to participate in TEMPUS IV education programmes.

The negotiations on a horizontal agreement on air transport were launched. The negotiations on further liberalisation on trade in agriculture, processed agriculture and fishery products continued. Bilateral negotiations on liberalisation of services and establishment will start soon.

Some examples how the ENP deepens the EU-Israel relationship

The Action Plan deepens political dialogue including through working together with the EU, bilaterally and as a member of the Quartet, with the objective of reaching a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

Strengthened EU-Israel co-operation in the fight against terrorism, with increased dialogue and exchange of information and an agreement to cooperate in relevant international fora: In June 2007, Israel hosted an ENP Troika seminar on "Radicalisation and Recruitment of Terrorists - Analysis and Prevention", an issue of common concern, with large participation of relevant representatives from both sides.

Commitments to promote protection of human rights and to co-operate in the fight against racism, anti-semitism, xenophobia and islamophobia: a second seminar on racism, anti-semitism, and xenophobia focusing on education related matters was hosted by Israel in January 2008 to share best practices.

Science and technological cooperation (renewed in July 2007), which allows Israeli researchers, universities and companies to participate in the EU's 7th Framework Research Programme. Israel was the first non-European country to be associated to this programme and will contribute approximately €440 million.

Promoting co-operation in energy including convergence towards the principles of the EU internal energy markets, development of networks and regional co-operation.

Assistance to Israel

In period 2007-2010 Israel will receive annually €2 million in Community assistance to support activities for the implementation of the Action Plan priorities, mainly in the form of institutional co-operation.

The Communication from the Commission to the Parliament and the Council *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2007* (3 April 2008) and a country report on Israel are available at

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/documents_en.htm

More on Israel and ENP

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/israel/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm