

Assistance to Lebanon: European Commission stands by its commitment

In 2008, the European Commission will provide a total of €42 million in assistance to Lebanon under the European Neighbourhood Policy. Core sectors for this assistance are the development of the private sector, local development in Northern Lebanon and the modernisation of the justice system.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy commented: *"After the Doha Agreement and the forming of a government Lebanon is facing a wide variety of challenges ranging from political reforms in the run-up to next year's elections, restoring the trust of the Lebanese people in its government and administration to reviving the economy. I have always underlined that we will continue to accompany the Lebanese government on this difficult path. Improvement of rule of law, a stronger private sector and reconstruction in the area of Nahr el-Bared in Northern Lebanon will all contribute to stabilizing Lebanon both politically and economically."*

The three priorities within the 2008 Action Programme are:

1. Reinforcement of the private sector competitiveness (€14 mio) which aims at strengthening services and financial instruments in support of enterprises with a specific emphasis on innovation and a further upgrade of the national quality management system.
2. Support to local development in Northern Lebanon (€18 mio) which will address the poorest part of Lebanon by promoting sustainable development especially in the agricultural sector. Active involvement of the local population will play an important role in the implementation as this project seeks to alleviate some of the economic consequences of the armed conflict in and around the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp.
3. Modernisation of the Lebanese justice system (€10 mio) seeks to improve case handling in Lebanese courts through the increased use of information technology. In addition, the project will provide the Judiciary Studies Institute with means to offer training to judges.

Background

Under the European Neighbourhood Policy the volume of assistance to Lebanon will be €187 million between 2007 -2010. Under the 2007 Annual Action Programme, Lebanon was granted € 50 million addressing economic recovery, political reforms, access to finance, de-mining and clearance of unexploded ordnance as well as support to education for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. This includes a € 15 million European Commission grant linked to a € 100 million European Investment Bank global loan in support of Small and Medium size Enterprises directly or indirectly affected by the conflict. Additional European Community assistance was

also provided through other Community Instruments. € 4.7 million were provided for immediate humanitarian relief to the victims of the fighting that erupted in and around the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp. Under the Instrument for Stability (IfS), funding was provided for the reconstruction of the camp (€ 6.8 million) and for a border management pilot project in Northern Lebanon (€ 2 million) and to help improve criminal investigation techniques (€ 0.4 million).

Further information on EU-Lebanon relations:

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