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European Neighbourhood Policy – LEBANON

EU–Lebanon relations: basic facts

The EU-Lebanon Association Agreement entered into force in April 2006 and sets a framework for political dialogue, economic policy cooperation, the gradual establishment of a free trade area, and cooperation on social issues.

The Action Plan was adopted on 19 January 2007.

Major developments in 2007

Taking into consideration the highly difficult political situation currently prevailing in Lebanon, the adoption of the Action Plan in January 2007 demonstrates in an impressive manner the country's commitment to the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The Action Plan and the Government of Lebanon's Reform Programme were not only adopted at the same time, but also have many similar objectives. The Action Plan therefore also serves as a tool to monitor the implementation of the economic, social and institutional reforms to which the Lebanese authorities have committed themselves at the Paris III International Donor Conference in January 2007.

Lebanon has made particular efforts to achieve progress on economic reforms and has ensured macroeconomic stability. Lebanon has also pursued its programme of structural reforms, which focuses on improving the business climate, privatization and the opening of markets. Several other reforms (e.g. in the fields of competition and taxation) have been agreed at Council of Ministers' level, even if further implementation has not been possible so far.

Some examples how the EU supports reforms in Lebanon

Low-income groups: working with the Lebanese Government's Council for Development and Reconstruction, through a multi-year €25 million Economic and Social Fund for development, the EU is helping to improve the economic and social conditions of low-income groups through support for local development and job-creation, including through micro-credit programmes. The project is an example of good cooperation with the Lebanese government.

Working on local development: some €37 million has already been spent on local development projects (involving around 200 rural municipalities). The Commission helps local actors (bringing together local administration, civil society and business) to develop medium and long-term development plans and supports the financing of some of the projects (in areas such as waste water treatment, tourism or the creation of public spaces). This is being expanded in 2008.

Helping the civil service with reforms: €30 million in assistance to public institutions that are involved in implementing the Association Agreement and ENP Action Plan, including provision of European experts through Twinning, in fields such as consumer protection, justice, security, customs, regulatory authorities and quality infrastructure.

Reinforcement of the capacity of the police and the judiciary to deal with all types of crime with €7 million worth of technical assistance and material.

Supporting civil society: a €3 million programme, working with the Government and non-governmental organisations on issues such as the promotion of good citizenship, intercommunity dialogue and providing legal support to vulnerable groups (migrant workers and refugees).

Support for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, mostly in UN-run refugee camps. EC-funded projects to support refugees are implemented by European NGOs and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This includes providing shelter and support to socio-economic development, vocational training and temporary employment, university scholarships, health and food aid. The Commission has also provided almost €20 million in humanitarian and early rehabilitation assistance to the victims of the Nahr Al Bared crisis.

Clearing of unexploded ordnance: after the 2006 military conflict the European Commission provided equipment and financial support to the demining actions and the clearing of cluster bombs which remained in South Lebanon. This effort continued in 2007 with a €4 million project supporting demining teams.

Through cooperation in the frame of 10 different ENP subcommittees – covering the policy fields of economics and finance, trade, internal market, transport, energy and environment, human rights and governance, social affairs, research and innovation, agriculture and fisheries, customs, justice and security – the EU will provide Lebanon with appropriate technical support in the reform process.

Assistance to Lebanon

In 2007, €50 million in Community assistance was allocated to Lebanon to focus on the reform priorities agreed in the Action Plan and for reconstruction.

The overall allocation for 2007-2010 is €187 million, under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument.

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 Lebanon are available at

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

More on Lebanon and ENP

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

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