

**Speech of Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst
Head of Delegation of the European Union in Lebanon**

Launching of EuroMed Youth IV initiatives

Tuesday 2 July 2013

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the priorities of the European Union is to facilitate partnerships and networks of young people within the Euro-Mediterranean Region. I am therefore pleased to launch with you here today the start-off of 7 new initiatives aiming at stimulating a mutual comprehension among youth in this region.

More than half of the population in Lebanon is below the age of 25. You are creative, educated, ambitious, and rightly seek a sense of solidarity around common causes. You constitute more than 41% of the labour force¹ which makes you active players in the country's economic development.

¹ 1 Dr. Riad Tabbarah, Draft Study on the Lebanese Youth Condition, 2010

Most of you choose to move from the rural areas to the city and some migrate from the cities and villages to abroad, to countries where it is believed there are better opportunities for a better future.

The sense of disenchantment and disempowerment is felt all over. For those who stay in the country, the increasingly tight labour market and growing unemployment rates (now about 24%) are a huge challenge. The presence of many hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees on Lebanese territory has put additional pressure on the labour market, as we are all very well aware.

I am glad to note that the Mikati-Government and in particular Minister Faycal Karame succeeded in launching the "Youth Policy in Lebanon" in April 2012. Here we have an outline of all needed actions to enable young people to become constructive agents of change and to better integrate socially, and professionally into society.

Soon, a new EU programme will be launched providing technical assistance for the Ministry and other stakeholders dealing with youth development. Civil society will be more involved in policy development related to young people's political, social and economic rights. Civil society will also be more engaged in implementing initiatives and addressing priorities identified in the new Lebanese Youth Policy.

For now, I wish the youth associations and municipalities who are present here today, all the success in their important work. I truly hope

that with our support you can reach tangible results and shape the future in the way you see best for yourselves and your country.

Thank you.