

newsletter

lettre d'information de la Délégation de la Commission Européenne au Liban

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Active EU support for private sector development



The private sector has a pre-eminent role in terms of driving economic growth, creating jobs and reducing poverty. Improving the regulatory environment for business is therefore an EU policy priority, in Europe as well as for our relations with European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) partners.

In Lebanon, the dynamism and entrepreneurship of the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector is particularly striking, and it is for this reason that the EU provides considerable support – both technical and financial – to help unlock the potential of the private sector and to help it innovate and grow. The priority accorded to private sector development is fully reflected in the EU/Lebanon Association Agreement, the EU/Lebanon Action Plan under the ENP and in cooperation with Lebanon in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise.

Our experience in the EU is that open markets can further contribute to innovation and growth, and that trade is an effective means of boosting prosperity and bolstering security and stability. This is why the EU is committed to enhancing trade

between the EU and Lebanon as well as to supporting the integration of Lebanon into regional and global markets. The EU has itself seen the benefits of removing tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, increasing competition and integrating its economy into the global trading system. We are working closely with the Lebanese authorities to bring these same benefits to Lebanon, whether it is through our support for Lebanon's accession to the WTO or via ongoing negotiations on dispute settlement and for the liberalisation of services and establishment.

The European Union provides Lebanon with substantial assistance to achieve these aims: more than €68 million have been allocated to support the development of the Lebanese private sector since 2003, in particular to support the development and activities of SMEs. In addition, more than €28 million have been provided to help enhance Lebanon's trade performance, targeting trade with the EU, regional integration and access to global markets. An overview of the EU's recent and current activities in Lebanon can be found on page 3 of this newsletter.



Le Liban, un acteur de la mondialisation ?

Le Liban se prépare pour les élections parlementaires du printemps prochain. Cette échéance électorale sera déterminante à de nombreux égards, et en particulier pour les perspectives économiques. Jusqu'à présent, quelques progrès ont été réalisés afin d'entreprendre les réformes indispensables, mais les acteurs politiques libanais devront accentuer leurs efforts.

Le Liban bénéficie trop peu de la mondialisation. Malgré la crise financière actuelle, cette période est une fenêtre d'opportunité, notamment dans l'optique de l'accession à l'Organisation Mondiale du Commerce à laquelle le Liban est candidat depuis près de dix ans. D'une part, la classe politique a l'occasion de mettre fin à la paralysie législative qui a enrayé le processus de réformes. De l'autre, les milieux économiques se doivent de mesurer l'importance de cette accession et d'occuper toute leur place dans la dynamique libanaise de changement.

L'histoire de l'Europe nous le rappelle : l'intégration économique et commerciale est aussi un point de départ, un moyen efficace d'atteindre la prospérité, la paix et la sécurité afin de tourner le dos à une histoire tourmentée.

L'Union Européenne a fait du développement du secteur privé l'une de ses priorités dans la coopération au développement. Par ses projets, mais aussi à travers l'organisation de forums interlibanais sur la politique économique et sociale, elle aide les Libanais à définir leurs propres priorités et à les mettre en œuvre. La clé de la réussite, dans ce pays au potentiel formidable, c'est l'appropriation du processus de réforme par les Libanais eux-mêmes.

Patrick Laurent
Chef de Délégation

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www.dellbn.ec.europa.eu

Interview

Financing falls into place

Lebanon is a country with a strong entrepreneurial tradition. Easy access to loans on its part is an essential prerequisite for entrepreneurial activity, especially that of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that play a fundamental role in the Lebanese economy. For this edition of the newsletter, we talked to Dr. Khater Abi Habib, Chairman of the Board of Directors and General Manager of Kafalat ("guarantees"), a financial company that allows SMEs to access bank funding, at a reasonable cost and reducing the need for collateral.

What is the role of the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector in the Lebanese economy?

The SME sector in Lebanon is the biggest contributor to the Lebanese economy and to the gross national product. This sector represents about 95% of the economy as per Kafalat, which considers an SME to have a maximum of 40 employees. The ceiling of 40 employees will probably be raised to 60 employees in a later stage, when we will have a higher growth rate.

What are the main challenges for SMEs in Lebanon?

The main challenge for SMEs is the unstable political situation that is disturbing the production cycle of these companies and preventing entrepreneurs to plan ahead for the future. With regards to bureaucracy and corruption, Lebanon's situation is of an intermediate nature in international practice. Access to loans for SMEs has improved greatly and the situation is reasonably favourable.

How does Kafalat support local entrepreneurship through its work?

Kafalat has engaged in three different programmes adapted to the different needs and activities of SMEs in Lebanon: Kafalat Basic, Kafalat Plus and Kafalat Innovative (the latter two financed by the EU). The total of the three programmes is distributed among five different sectors of the economy as follows:

Industrial: 44.69%

Agricultural: 37.74%

Artisanal: 3.11%

Tourism: 12.5%

High technology: 1.97%

These programmes are distributed among the different Lebanese regions as follows:

Mount Lebanon: 48.41%

Beirut: 6.7%

Nabatiyeh: 4.87%

North: 10.93%

South: 11.12%

Bekaa: 17.97%

We also have a new programme which is still at a conceptual level, and in co-operation with the EU, a Seed Capital guarantee fund, aimed at providing the market with a new growth tool.

What positive role can the international community play in supporting SMEs – and enterprise in general – in Lebanon? Which role does the EU play?

The international community can help on the equity side for financing enterprises and an even more important role that would be to help SMEs is to access international markets since the local market is very small. This would also give legitimacy to Lebanese products and expand markets further for them. Financing is falling into place, thanks to new programmes that are at the heart of Kafalat activities and the Seed Capital guarantee fund is the most recent example. The EU has helped with a programme for the support of industry, the Euro-Lebanese Centre For Industrial Modernisation (ELCIM) and in the establishment of incubators for technology and for business development in the various regions. We think that the ELCIM project will benefit from a particular re-orientation in emphasis, to help SMEs individually and by sector to become more expert oriented.

What does Kafalat do?

Kafalat is a loan guarantee company, established by the Lebanese government in 1999 to support the activity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The Lebanese banks hold also shares (less than 50%). Kafalat assists SMEs to access commercial bank funding by providing loan guarantees based on business plans or feasibility studies that show the viability of the proposed business activity. It reduces the need for collateral that banks usually request in order to grant a loan. It also processes guarantee applications for loans that are provided by Lebanese banks to SMEs operating throughout Lebanon.



The agricultural sector accounts for nearly 38% of Kafalat's activity.

As head of Kafalat, what are your policy priorities? Which are the key issues that still need to be tackled?

For the tasks that Kafalat sets for itself and within its own scope of operations, we have two immediate priorities: first, to launch, with the help of, or in conjunction with the EU programme, a small fund to guarantee Seed Capital investment in start up companies in the field of innovation. This will be a logical and necessary supplement for Kafalat "innovative loans". And second, to raise the ceiling of the Kafalat plus loans either by 50% or even by 75%. This involves either the transformation in nature of the National Institute for the Guarantee of Deposits, our major shareholder, or instituting a law lifting the constraint placed on the ceiling of the guarantee offset against Kafalat's own equity, which was imposed by legislators.

In the same vein, the company is considering getting into guaranteeing capital assets for sectors which are not covered, such as services and commerce. Parallel to this, Kafalat is working with a consulting team which is mostly financed by the IFC to strengthen aspects of data management and of process management in the company.

The questions were asked by Karen Matzke.

Business Development Centres

Helping entrepreneurs realise their dream of business ownership

In the framework of the «Integrated Support Programme to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises» that received EU funding of €17 million for the period 2004 to 2008, a network of Business Support Services has been created in Lebanon. In March 2007, four Business Development Centres – BDCs – were established: in Tripoli (BIAT), Beirut (Berytech), Zahlé and Saida (SouthBic). These were launched in collaboration with the Lebanese Chambers of Commerce, Universities and NGOs.

Currently, 3 of these BDCs (Tripoli, Saida and Beirut) function as incubators for promising

start-ups, as the centres provide space and advice, from how to produce a business plan and securing financing through developing products and expanding exports. The centres also train managers and help entrepreneurs make contacts in the business community. This business nurturing has the ultimate objective of contributing to economic regional development and to job-creation.

The Beirut centre, Berytech, focuses on start-ups in the technology and health sectors. Berytech has handled more than 130 enquiries and requests for advice. Over 110 meetings were organised to provide



Tripoli Business Development Centre

assistance in marketing, research, financial planning, business plan development, etc. 80 individuals have been trained in entrepreneurial, IT and business skills and 28 tenants have been hosted in its 10-story building on Damascus Road. The facilities in Tripoli and Saida are also providing multi-sector support to industries in their regions of activity.

EC-Funded Programmes in Lebanon related to Economic and Trade development

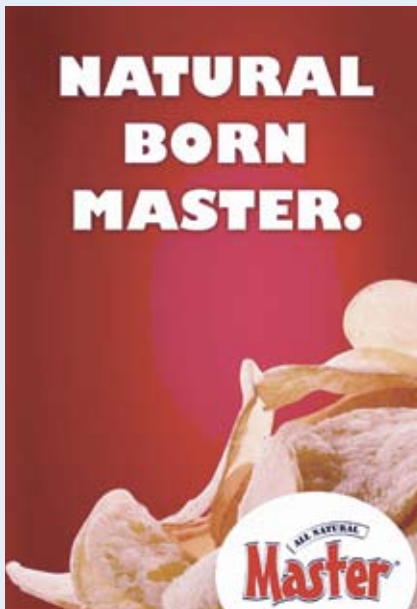
Project Title	Project Description	Period	€ (euro)
Agricultural Development Project (ADP)	To improve the production and commercialisation of fruits and vegetables on domestic and export markets.	2004-2008	12 000 000
Integrated Support to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises	The three main components are: A) Policy and institutional development component; B) Business development services to SMEs; C) Facilitation of access to financing for SMEs.	2004-2008	17 000 000
Strengthening Quality Management, Capabilities and Infrastructure in Lebanon – 'QUALEB Programme'	To improve market access of Lebanese products and services through better conformity with technical requirements and international standards. Support to SMEs for ISO certification.	2004-2008	15 000 000
Economic and Social Fund for Development	To reduce poverty by two types of actions: a) Job creation to facilitate the start-up of small enterprises through access to credit facilities for persons deemed non-bancable and loans by NGOs; b) Community development.	2004-2010	15 000 000
MAJAL	Development of a risk management system for customs.	2008	2 000 000
Trade Needs Assessment	To identify the constraints facing Lebanon's integration into the world trade system and to propose a strategy to address these constraints.	2008	135 000
Support to Reforms II - 'QUALEB Bridge Programme'	To further develop and improve the functioning of the Lebanese quality infrastructure and to create a culture of quality. Main areas: Inspection and certification, proficiency testing and inter-labs comparison, food safety, quality awareness and infrastructure.	2008-2009	2 400 000
Control of radio-active materials	Strengthening of infrastructure related to Lebanese trade and border control of radioactive material and development of crisis response systems.	2008-2010	2 500 000
Reinstate the Vessel Traffic System VTS	To reinstate Lebanon's vessel traffic system (in Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre) destroyed in 2006.	2008-2010	3 500 000
Reinforcement of the Private Sector Competitiveness	To improve the business enabling environment, strengthening of services to enterprises with focus on innovation, facilitation of access to finance and consolidation of national quality management systems.	2008-2011	14 000 000
Support to Reforms III	Implementation of the strategy proposed under the Trade Needs Assessment project (above).	2009-2011	8 000 000

Success Stories

Integrated Support to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

EC support has had a tangible positive impact on the Lebanese private sector: increased exports, better consumer protection and the creation of jobs. Here, we present three out of many success stories to show EU expert support and know-how is transferred to Lebanese companies, in the context of the need for Lebanese firms to be competitive if they want to internationalise and gain new export markets. The implementation of Quality Management Systems such as ISO certifications provides companies with an efficient tool to improve quality based on internationally accepted standards.

Certified snacking

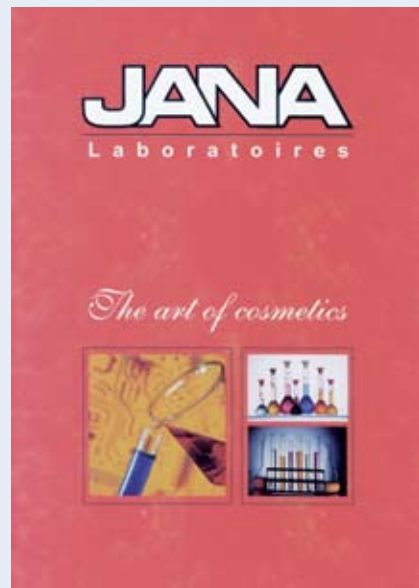


Delta Trading s.a.l., located in the Bekaa Valley, produces MASTER potato chips and snacks, and is the market leader in the Lebanese market and a major supplier in a number of Arab countries with a total of 240 full time employees.

Food safety and quality have always been the company's main focus. Accordingly, when QUALEB completed its Gap Analysis in November 2006 and offered to support the ambitions of the company to be ISO 22000 certified, Jalil El Jakl, Quality Systems Manager, immediately accepted: "This was an incredible challenge for the whole team. However, the sense of achievement for us all was exceptional, when we were finally ISO certified in August 2008. This achievement is the result of dedicated team work, loyal support of our management and ongoing support and inputs of QUALEB throughout the

entire period". Being certified has given the company the opportunity to penetrate new export markets, starting in the EU Member States of Romania and Bulgaria.

Financial support for local entrepreneurs



Nahed and her husband opened a small pharmaceutical company, JANA, in Tripoli in 1989, specialised in cosmetics. Their motto was "Think small first". In only a few years, JANA won a 25% and a 10% share of Tripoli and Beirut markets respectively, due to the quality and pricing of its products. Today, the owners are being approached by potential Sudanese and Jordanian clients and are considering enlarging their structure and improving their marketing potential, in order to increase their sales capacity in Lebanon as well as target the export market.

But, as is the case with many potentially productive Lebanese enterprises, there was

a problem with obtaining financial support. The "Integrated Support to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises" programme is intended to address such difficulties. Three Business Centres in Tripoli, Beirut and Saïda currently incubate and host enterprises, facilitate networking and support the preparation of business plans.

The demand for these services is high in Lebanon. An EU-study has revealed that the survival rate of incubated enterprises reached 87.55% during the first 3 years.

Certified printing

Established in 1968 with 110 employees, Arab Printing Press is a fully commercial offset printing organisation, operating from a 7,000 square metre facility in Beirut, printing magazines, books and print works to order. The company primarily serves the Lebanese market but also has export sales to other Middle East countries and Africa. It was one of the early participants to apply for the QUALEB ISO project in June 2006 and Arab Printing Press was formally certified in December 2007.

Administrative Manager, Nabil Honein stated "our primary objective was to be ISO 9001 certified, in addition to which, we wanted to improve our quality management system. Increased export sales through developing new business opportunities, such as international bids, was also a stated target. This has already commenced, with the completion of a successful international bid from UNICEF, to print school books for Madagascar. In addition, the company has opened a representative office in France to generate new business opportunities. To date, export sales have increased by 25%, compared to last year".

Centre euro-libanais pour la modernisation industrielle - ELCIM

Le soutien aux PME continue sur sa lancée



L'Institut de recherche industrielle (IRI) et le Centre euro-libanais pour la modernisation industrielle (ELCIM) ont célébré le succès du travail accompli par ce dernier lors d'un dîner de gala qui s'est tenu début octobre au Grand Hôtel Habtoor, à Sin el Fil. En présence du Chef de la Délégation de la Commission Européenne au Liban, Patrick Laurent, et du Ministre de l'Industrie, Ghazi Zeaiter, cette soirée a été l'occasion de remercier la Commission Européenne pour son soutien à hauteur de plus de 3,2 millions d'euros par une assistance technique au projet qui, après plus de deux ans de service, a pris fin en août 2008.

Malgré la difficulté de la situation pour le Liban et son secteur privé, le ELCIM est parvenu à atteindre ses objectifs de façon plus que satisfaisante: il s'est imposé comme un fournisseur de services aux entreprises du secteur manufacturier (mais aussi touristique et de services) à la fois compétent et guidé par la demande. Le ELCIM a apporté au total plus de 285 services de soutien à l'amélioration commerciale auprès de 140 entreprises, notamment en termes de planification commerciale, de facilitation de l'accès aux prêts et aux financements, de développement des produits, d'accroissement du marché, de ventes et d'exportations, d'augmentation du potentiel de production, de formations spécifiques, etc.

Enfin et surtout, le ELCIM est devenu une institution bien établie et respectée au Liban dans le domaine des services d'appui aux petites et moyennes entreprises (PME). C'est aujourd'hui un centre solide et autonome qui continuera à apporter son soutien aux entrepreneurs libanais.

Intégration dans les marchés mondiaux Dynamiser le potentiel commercial du Liban

L'Union Européenne est de loin le premier partenaire commercial du Liban. En 2007, environ 40% des importations du Liban (soit plus de 4 milliards de dollars) provenaient de l'UE, et 15% des exportations libanaises y étaient destinées. La Commission Européenne est déterminée à aider le Liban à exploiter le potentiel de croissance de ses échanges, que ce soit avec l'UE, avec ses partenaires méditerranéens, ou au-delà. Notre engagement en ce sens est intimement lié à la priorité donnée par l'UE au commerce comme instrument de création de richesse, de réduction de la pauvreté, et de développement.

Les relations UE/Liban sont régies par l'Accord d'Association dont les aspects commerciaux sont entrés en vigueur en 2003, au moment où l'UE ouvrait de manière asymétrique ses marchés pour permettre à tous les produits industriels libanais et à la plupart des produits agricoles d'entrer sans droit de douane dans l'UE. Cette dernière s'attache à faire profiter le plus possible au Liban de l'économie mondialisée à travers deux autres processus : premièrement, la candidature du Liban à l'Organisation mondiale du commerce (OMC); deuxièmement, les négociations Euromed sur les services et l'investissement/

l'établissement, ainsi que sur le règlement des différends (qui s'inscrivent dans les efforts de l'UE visant à établir une zone de libre-échange total euro-méditerranéenne).

L'UE soutient l'accession du Liban à l'OMC comme un moyen de renforcer la prévisibilité et la transparence de son environnement des affaires, et comme un moteur important pour les réformes économiques qui dynamiseront à leur tour les échanges avec l'UE et d'autres partenaires. La Commission Européenne espère accélérer les négociations bilatérales, et sa Délégation à Beyrouth a prévu un séminaire cet automne afin de promouvoir la libéralisation des échanges dans les services-clés. Les discussions politiques menées par l'UE ont été soutenues par plusieurs interventions majeures sous forme d'assistance technique depuis que le Liban a déposé sa candidature à l'OMC, en 1999.

Dans le cadre d'Euromed, les Ministres du Commerce réunis en juillet 2008 se sont entendus pour lancer un mécanisme euro-méditerranéen de facilitation des échanges commerciaux, afin d'offrir un plus grande transparence des échanges et des opportunités d'investissements aux acteurs économiques de toute la région. L'objectif d'un tel instrument est de renforcer la



capacité des partenaires méditerranéens de l'UE à attirer les investissements et d'améliorer leur avantage comparatif sur les marchés Euromed.

Dernière nouvelle: la Commission Européenne et le Ministère libanais de l'Economie et du Commerce ont conjointement décidé de lancer une évaluation en profondeur des besoins commerciaux du Liban, d'identifier les contraintes auxquelles le pays est confronté au sein du système commercial mondial, et de proposer une liste des actions prioritaires destinées à y remédier. Cette démarche devrait aider le Liban à inscrire les enjeux commerciaux dans une véritable stratégie de développement, à participer de façon effective au système commercial multilatéral et régional, à faciliter la coordination des bailleurs de fonds et à catalyser des financements supplémentaires. La Commission prévoit une intervention de soutien de plusieurs millions d'euros en 2009 afin de faire face aux contraintes précédemment identifiées.

Lebanese Trade and Border Control

National Radioprotection Infrastructure

Under the EU/Lebanon European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan, a number of specific actions have been identified to help create the conditions necessary to facilitate Lebanon's integration into European, regional and world trade markets. One example is the responsibility to combat illicit trafficking and the inadvertent movement of radioactive material. All imports and exports should therefore be subject to global radioprotection control and regulations in order to establish confidence in trade and increase public health and safety.

Lebanese Customs in the Ministry of Finance is the primary beneficiary of a project to do just this, funded by the EU to the tune of €1.8 million. Following the decision of Lebanese Customs to improve its overall monitoring and detection capabilities by establishing radiation detection infrastructure at Lebanon's borders, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) provided training to Lebanese Customs and helped install EU-funded radiation detection equipment at one border crossing. Lebanese Customs is now looking to expand the infrastructure to the rest of the borders through this EU project.



Customs

Implementation of an IT Risk Management System (MAJAL)

The EU-funded MAJAL project aims at fully implementing a risk management system at Beirut sea port, which will replace random inspections. This will be achieved by profiling cargoes with reference to known parameters such as the status of the owner, shipper, country of origin, type of goods, etc. It aims to speed up the processing of legitimate cargoes, increase detection rates, and combat corruption. The system will be integrated in the current IT-based processing system used by Customs, ASYCUDA World, as well as relevant international and national databases.

More specifically, the project will review the MAJAL IT Risk Management System Prototype, familiarise Customs officials with EU best practice in the application of risk management principles and techniques, as well as design, develop, implement and test the MAJAL IT Risk Management System.

Forum interlibanais sur la compétitivité des entreprises et la concurrence Favoriser la croissance des PME et renforcer la concurrence

Un Forum interlibanais sur la compétitivité des entreprises et la concurrence s'est tenu à Beyrouth les 15 et 16 octobre 2008 à l'initiative de la Commission Européenne. Ce Forum a réuni des représentants de tous les blocs parlementaires, des principaux organismes professionnels (agriculteurs, industriels, banquiers et commerçants) ainsi que de la Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Libanais (CGTL). Il faisait suite à deux Forums déjà organisés en mai 2007 et en avril 2008 et qui avaient été consacrés, respectivement, à dégager une vision commune du Liban de demain sur le plan économique et social et à définir le contenu des politiques sociales dont le Liban a le plus besoin. Avec ce troisième Forum, les représentants politiques et économiques du pays étaient appelés à examiner la situation des entreprises libanaises, notamment les petites et moyennes entreprises (PME), à

proposer des solutions à leurs problèmes et à se pencher sur le degré de concurrence qui existe sur le marché libanais afin de déterminer si celui-ci permet aux entreprises les plus performantes de se développer, et aux consommateurs de bénéficier de produits de qualité à des prix compétitifs.

Le document sur lequel se sont entendus les participants appelle le gouvernement à améliorer les infrastructures relatives à l'énergie, aux télécommunications et aux transports, à simplifier les formalités administratives et à réduire les coûts de transaction, notamment en luttant contre la corruption. Reconnaisant l'importance des accords commerciaux internationaux, les participants engagent les autorités à y introduire des instruments de défense commerciale et à donner toute son importance au rythme du démantèlement

tarifaire. Ils soulignent également la nécessité de développer une justice commerciale rapide et efficace et de promouvoir la transparence des comptes afin de favoriser la croissance des PME par apports extérieurs. Il est également souhaitable, pour la croissance des PME, que celles-ci aient accès au financement et aux marchés publics. Les représentants politiques et économiques encouragent par ailleurs la création d'une Haute Autorité de la Concurrence disposant de pouvoirs d'investigation, de décision et de sanction. Les blocs politiques parlementaires appellent enfin à revoir les lois relatives aux entreprises dans le cadre d'un «Small Business Act» libanais.

Les conclusions du Forum se trouvent sur le site:

<http://www.dellbn.ec.europa.eu/fr/whatsnew/index.htm>

Euro-Med Charter for Enterprise

Common principles benefit Lebanon's economy

In October 2004 Lebanon and eight other Mediterranean countries endorsed the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise. The Charter contains the common principles on which these States can base their enterprise policy. The ambition is to create an environment conducive to investment and private sector development as well as to define common strategies and projects, both at national and regional level. The prerequisites for success are a stable macroeconomic framework and a fair and transparent judicial system. The Charter allows for the systematic exchange of experience, good practice and knowledge in the Euro-Mediterranean area. The sharing of information between partners will enhance regional co-operation activities. Progress in implementation of the Charter's common principles will be monitored periodically.

In Lebanon, an assessment mission of the European Commission in March

2008 evaluated the state of play of implementation of the Charter for Enterprise. The mission observed that the EC-funded private sector-related programmes in Lebanon have already had a substantial impact in the evaluation of most areas of the charter. In particular, the areas of education and training for entrepreneurship; access to finance and investment friendly taxation; better market access; innovative firms; strong business associations and quality business support schemes and services have benefited from EU funding. Indeed, EU-supported actions constitute the backbone of actions in private sector development in Lebanon. In addition, these areas will be directly tackled in a forthcoming €14 million business sector development programme, most notably in the areas of achieving an environment more conducive to business, strengthening innovative firms and increasing participation in Euro-Med Networks and partnerships.



European Neighbourhood Policy

More funds for vital investments

«With the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) we now have the mechanism allowing us to put additional resources at the disposal of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). But it also gives a clear political message to neighbouring countries that we are serious about closer relations and shared prosperity». This was the message of EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner when launching the new EU financial instrument at the beginning of May 2008.

The NIF brings together the European Commission and EU Member States as grant providers and the European Public Finance Institutions, who will use their financial muscle to leverage four, five or six euro of actual funding from the financial markets for each euro of grant funding for the implementation of key infrastructure projects. The NIF is geared to help the EU's ENP partner countries profit from more funds for vital investment – especially in the energy, transport and environment sectors.

The intention is that the NIF will provide up to €700 million between now and 2013, with the European Commission having already committed €100 million to the Fund. This money will be matched by considerable contributions from the Member States.



A number of countries have already committed to allocate funds this year.

The European Commission also underlined the auspicious timing of the NIF, shortly

after the first summit of the "Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean" in July, which has a strong projects base. The NIF offers one additional source of funding for such projects.

Events

Festival du Cinéma européen

Le 15^{ème} Festival du Cinéma européen aura lieu du 27 novembre au 7 décembre au Cinéma SIX (Empire Sofil - Achrafieh).

Le Festival sera l'occasion d'un véritable échange cinématographique entre l'Europe et le Liban: les dernières créations européennes, un film libanais récent, et des courts métrages de la nouvelle génération de jeunes diplômés des écoles audiovisuelles libanaises seront projetés.

Le Festival du Cinéma européen est organisé par la Délégation de la Commission Européenne au Liban, en collaboration avec les Ambassades et Instituts culturels des pays membres de l'Union Européenne.



Les 7 et 8 novembre, à l'Université Antonine, Hadath

Dans le cadre du projet financé par la Commission Européenne «Accès aux soins des migrants incarcérés au Liban», la Direction générale des Forces de Sécurité Intérieure, l'Association Justice et Miséricorde et l'ONG Médecins du Monde – France organisent une conférence de deux jours sur le thème «Healthcare in prisons».

Le 18 novembre, au Bureau du Ministre d'Etat pour la Réforme Administrative

Dans le cadre du projet AFKAR, une table ronde se tiendra sur le thème suivant : "Role of Media in the promotion of civil society concerns and initiatives", le 18 novembre.

Erasmus Mundus Successful Lebanese students and scholars receive scholarships to study in the EU



Nine students and one scholar from Lebanon have been selected to receive an Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses scholarship for the academic year 2008/09. These scholarships will allow them to study in Europe for one or two years and obtain a Masters degree from one of the 103 top-quality Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses offered by consortia of European higher education institutions. This was reason enough for the Delegation of the European Commission to Lebanon to organise a small reception for the beneficiaries of the scholarship at the end of June. The Head of Delegation, Ambassador Patrick Laurent encouraged the students to make the most of their experience and urged them to pursue the social side of the Erasmus experience as well as the study side.

The Erasmus Mundus programme is the EU's co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education. It aims to enhance quality in European higher education and to promote intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries. It supports European top-quality Masters Courses and also provides EU-funded scholarships for third country nationals participating in these Masters Courses (students, and scholars for teaching and research activities). The programme also provides scholarships for EU-nationals studying at partner universities throughout the world. The Masters Courses are high-quality Masters level programmes designed and offered by a consortium of higher education institutions in at least three different European countries.

For more information on Erasmus Mundus:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

Calls for Proposals

New calls for proposals on environment, including water and climate change

With an indicative budget €193.5 million, a number of topics of mutual interest for the EU & Lebanon are open for funding. Partners such as researchers, universities, research centres or any other academic entity, NGOs, CSOs, SMEs are eligible for participation. The Programme is open to civil society organisations and representatives of the private sector who may set up partnerships with researchers and other stakeholders. For more information, please visit:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html