



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

**Second National Steering Committee of the EU regional programme "Support to
the Development of Creative Industries and Clusters in the Southern
Mediterranean"**

Ministry of Industry
12 November 2014

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Your Excellency Minister of Industry, Dr Hussein Hajj Hassan,
Your Excellency Ambassador of Italy in Lebanon, Mr Giuseppe Morabito,
Representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization
(UNIDO), Mr Cristiano Pasini,
President of the Association of Lebanese Industrialists, Dr Fady Gemayel,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Creativity and innovation are in Lebanon's DNA. The country's diversity,
multiculturalism, dynamism and openness have inspired generations of creative
individuals. One cannot mention Lebanon without thinking about all the young

talents, active in various fields such as handicrafts, art, culture, music, digital media, fashion, design and many more.

The regional programme "Development of Clusters and Creative Industries in the Southern Mediterranean Region", which is co-funded by the European Union and the Italian Cooperation for a total amount of 5.6 million euros, taps into this huge potential of creativity. Alongside other regional and national European Union funded programmes, it aims at boosting the private sector and contributing to sustainable and inclusive growth. As we are all aware, sustainable growth and employment are major concerns in the South Mediterranean. Around 5 million jobs need to be created every year to foster social inclusion. The largest employers of the region are Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), which account for 90% of total employment. Our support to these businesses is centred around assisting them in their endeavour to develop and reach their fullest potential, and therefore to become attractive employment destinations.

Encouraging entrepreneurial cooperation in creative industries through cluster building will help SMEs reach this objective. Through collaboration, cooperation, the pooling of resources and talents and the provision of tailor-made business support services to SMEs, we can help them unleash their untapped business potential. Thanks to the very thorough mapping carried out by UNIDO, we now have a clearer picture, a '*cartography*' of the existing creative segments in the country. We can now clearly see that there is a huge potential.

I am not surprised that we have received so many excellent ideas through the call for proposals that was launched in the framework of this programme. Competition was fierce as many great proposals were in the race. Today, we can only select two 'winning' clusters that will benefit from capacity-building and training.

By providing this assistance, we would ultimately like to see the pilot projects being replicated on a wider scale and thus create a momentum for further cluster development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The European Union believes that the private sector is Lebanon's engine for growth and job creation. Since 2003, more than 70 million euros have been allocated to enhance the capacities of SMEs, to boost the private sector and improve the business environment. This support is particularly relevant now, amid these times of crisis.

After funding business incubators, supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises, as well as the improvement of quality infrastructures and after creating financing mechanisms for SMEs in Lebanon, the European Union is now starting to look more closely at the creative industries and is seeking ways to complement the regional initiatives with bilateral assistance in the next programming phase. I can assure you that great attention will be given to strengthening the overall success of 'Creative Lebanon'.

Let me conclude by thanking H.E. Minister of Industry, Hussein Hajj Hasan, UNIDO, the Italian Cooperation and all the people who are contributing to the success of this initiative.

Thank you.