



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

***The role of the European Union in Local Development in Lebanon  
Experience of the Shouf Souayjani Union of Municipalities and the  
Municipality of Baakline***

Municipal Palace of Baakline  
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*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

Mayor of Baakline and President of Shouf Souayjani Federation of Municipalities

Dr Nouha Ghosseini,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

It is a real pleasure for me to be here today to discuss how the European Union can support local development in Lebanon. First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr Ghosseini for her inspiring initiative and for inviting us to be part of it. Currently, the European Union works with 585 municipalities all across Lebanon, and provides approximately 124 million Euros in support of local development. We can be nothing but proud of our ongoing partnership with the local authorities of Lebanon.

The Municipality of Baakline and the Shouf Souayjani Federation of Municipalities provide great examples of how a successful partnership between the European Union and the local authorities of Lebanon functions.

These municipalities have been involved in a number of EU-funded projects that contribute to strengthening their capacity and to improving the quality of life of the citizens. Their determination to be sustainable, environmentally friendly municipalities with broad democratic participation of their citizens and with plenty of opportunities for work, education and access to health care is exemplary, and it is a vivid demonstration of why the EU places such great importance in supporting the development of local authorities.

The EU funded "Local Governance" - or LOGO - Programme is only one good example of how the European Union supports local development. The Shouf Souayjani Federation of Municipalities was one of our partners in this extensive programme, and was able to rehabilitate the traditional central squares of Souayjani villages, the ancient fountains, the traditional souk in Baakline, and to establish a centre for ecotourism in the Baakline Forest.

To further a participatory approach, Baakline has been involved in the initiative entitled "Let's build our inclusive cities of Shouf Souayjani Region and Develop the Participative Democracy". The title of this programme says it all. The programme activates the participation of the civil society of the Shouf Souayjani region, through the formation of elected neighbourhood committees and enhances the role of the Residential Neighbourhood Committee. Ultimately, all this aims at fostering transparency and democracy at local level, and we hope that it will set an example of inclusive and participatory democracy across Lebanon.

With its participation in the EU funded SUDEP - which stands for "Sustainable Urban Demonstration Energy Projects" – the municipalities of Shouf Souayjani enter the ambitious race to turn Baakline into a "Smart and sustainable city by 2020" and we congratulate you for taking up this challenge. The European Union and the Member States share your conviction that efficient energy policies are of utmost importance for local and regional development. Firm commitments were made last year to work

towards a joint EU framework on climate and energy for 2030. The agreed targets include a cut in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, an EU-wide binding target for renewable energy of at least 27% and an indicative energy efficiency target of at least 27%. These ambitious objectives put the EU in pole position, as a frontrunner in the fight against climate change. Through signing "The Covenant of Mayors", Baakline sets an excellent example of how to become a Smart and Sustainable city itself, which we very much welcome. The "Covenant of Mayors" is a European initiative involving local and regional authorities committed to increasing energy efficiency and using renewable energy sources on their territories. Baakline has committed to reducing its greenhouse emissions by 20% by 2020, and thereby positioning itself as a "pioneer municipality" in renewable energy and energy saving actions in Lebanon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The multitude of EU-funded programmes addressing different aspects of development in the Shouf area demonstrate how partnerships are established between the European Union and local authorities in Lebanon, and underline how you are constantly striving to improve the quality of life of your citizens.

Thank you.