Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea

Newsletter 2016

A message from His Excellency, Ambassador Christian R. Manahl, Head of Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea

I am pleased to present the first newsletter of the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea. It gives you a glimpse of the variety of activities of the European Union in the country. Our core business is, of course, development cooperation, which is guided by the principles and guidelines of the Cotonou agreement, a multilateral treaty signed by 78 countries from Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions, the EU and all its Member States. However, the EU also maintains political, cultural and social relations with its international partners, and we want to work together with them in areas of environmental protection and other matters of common concern.

In the pursuit of these goals, the EU organized film screenings and art competitions, participated in a tree planting exercise and a public debate on climate change, supported vulnerable social groups, and hosted a reception to commemorate Human Rights Day. This newsletter reports about some of these activities in the course of last year. Regarding the future, we look forward to working with the authorities of the State of Eritrea as well as with non-governmental social partners and interest groups in pursuing a comprehensive relationship with Eritrea. We believe in openness and exchange that goes beyond commercial and development matters. Building on our own experience of uniting European countries with more than 20 languages and vastly different historical and cultural backgrounds, yet with shared principles and values, we are convinced that peaceful co-existence on the international level can best be achieved by promoting mutual understanding, identifying areas of common interest, and cooperating towards common goals.
2016 saw a variety of activities carried out by the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea. Below are the highlights:

29 January 2016 - Signature of the National Indicative Programme:

2016 began with a successful start for both the European Union and the State of Eritrea; demonstrated by the signing of a landmark agreement on future development cooperation, promoting renewable energy and sound governance.

The Eritrean Minister for National Development, Dr. Giorgis Teklemichael, and Ambassador Christian Manahl, Head of Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea, signed the National Indicative Program (NIP) under the 11th European Development Fund. The framework program of 200 M€ defines Eritrea-EU development cooperation for the next five years. It was approved by EU Member States in the EDF committee in November 2015.
16 February 2016 - Film Screening on Migration

The National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students in cooperation with Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea organized screenings of a movie named *Sahara* to Eritrean youth in three regions of the country. The film was made by Eritrean filmmakers and tells a story of a group of friends who illegally travel to Sudan, hope to cross the desert and then travel further to Europe.

The film conveyed a message to young people of their suffering, leaving their homes and going towards a dangerous journey and unsure fate. The film was screened in Asmara on 16 and 17 February, in Keren on 23 and 24 February and Massawa on 27 and 28 February.

This joint effort was aimed at raising awareness among youth about the dangers of illegal migration. During the opening event the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea, Ambassador Christian Manahl, underlined the risks of irregular migration, mentioning criminal human trafficking networks and the perils of crossing the Mediterranean. He expressed the hope that the film will make young people think twice before gambling their lives on a highly dangerous journey.

4 March 2016 - Inauguration of water supply in Hazega and Adibeney villages

With funds amounting to Euro 180,000 from the European Union, the villages of Hazega and Adibeney in the Central Region of Eritrea now have improved access to water. The Hazega and Adibeney water supply project was co-funded by the European Union and implemented by the Red Cross Society of Eritrea with the technical support of the Water Resource Department of the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment, and is a milestone project in both villages.
The water supply consists of a reservoir which contains 250 barrels of water, a water pump powered by a solar system of 2.2 KW, to ensure continuous water supply from the pump, as well as six water distribution centres that have been designed and constructed within a stone's throw away from the houses of the villagers.

Engineers designed the project in a way to guarantee supply to schools, distribution centres as well as clinics. The main beneficiaries of this project are women, students and elderly people but also the communities at large. The water supply system was inaugurated on 3 March 2016 in the presence of the Governor of Zoba Maekel, the Secretary General of the Red Cross Society of Eritrea, representatives from the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea, and from the Water Resource Department of the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment together with members of the community in the villages.

25 March 2016 - EU Delegation in Eritrea participates in the 2016 Book Fair

For the first time, the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea participated in the annual book fair, held in Asmara from 25 March to 3 April 2016. The 15th edition of Eritrean Book Fair under the theme “Quality Books for Advancing Education” was inaugurated by H.E. Ms. Fozia Hashim, Minister of Justice, in the presence of members of the diplomatic community.

Telephone: +291-1-12.65.66/12.79.59 Fax: +291-1-12.65.78 E-mail: Delegation-Eritrea@eeas.europa.eu
Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea

The Delegation of the European Union in Eritrea participated in the fair with a stand displaying publications and brochures highlighting the EU cooperation with Eritrea, as well as a series of children’s books, produced in Eritrea, explaining human rights.

25 August 2016 - A successful Tree Planting Activity

On a beautiful August morning, the Eritrean Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Land, Water and Environment in conjunction with the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea, and the European Union Member States Embassies accredited to Eritrea, planted 100 olive trees in Embaderho (about 11km outside of Asmara). The European Union has been supporting the people and government of Eritrea through the 10th EDF programme and other thematic programmes to enhance the agricultural sector and food security in Eritrea. Erosion mitigation programmes are key and a basis for sustainable development to improve the livelihood of the people, especially in the rural areas.
8 September 2016 - Support to Agriculture/Food Security in Eritrea

A further major milestone of the EU’s program in “Support to Agriculture/Food Security in Eritrea” was met: on 8 September 2016, the Ministry of National Development and the Israeli contractor "Naan Dan Jain Irrigation LTD" signed a contract worth 18.7 MEuro for the supply and installation of drip irrigation systems. The project will introduce a new drip irrigation technique and a total of 2.6 MW renewable photovoltaic source of energy will be installed, which in turn will enable farmers to improve their capacity to produce at least 2 harvests per year. The contract took effect as of 12 September 2016 for a maximum 18 month implementation period.

The Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea, Mr. Pierre Philippe, remarked that "since June 2013 to the current stage the European Union in partnership with the Government of the State of Eritrea has been supporting the agricultural sector of the country through the 10th EDF programme to enhance the agricultural production and productivity to the benefit of farmers".

Deputy National Authorising Officer Mr. Samsom Berhane stated that "this project will have an important contribution to the Government of Eritrea’s endeavours for food security through modernised irrigation systems.”

Upon signing the contract, a company representative expressed satisfaction about the agreement: "In our Company we measure ourselves the success of our projects by the smiles of happy farmers who benefit from the project. These benefits of higher yields and incomes from our modern sustainable irrigation solutions help in the economic uplifting of the farmer beneficiaries in the project. "

Telephone: +291-1-12.65.66/12.79.59 Fax: +291-1-12.65.78 E-mail: Delegation-Eritrea@eeas.europa.eu
28 September 2016 - 13th European Film Festival

In coordination with the European Union Member States Embassies in Eritrea, the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea organised the annual European Film Week for the 13th consecutive year. Films from Italy, Germany, UK, Belgium and Spain were screened. The Ministry of Education assisted in organising the children’s programme. A total of 2,400 students from 20 elementary schools in Central Region attended the children’s programme.

12 October 2016 - Inauguration by Segen Artist Group

43 students graduated in drawing, painting and sculpture after a two year training programme organised by Segen Artist Group. The students carried out the art programme along with their academic studies. The two year project was co-funded by the European Union and implemented by the Segen Artist Group. Ambassador Christian Manahl, Head of Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea, expressed delight at the European Union being part of such projects, as he congratulated the young graduates for their fruitful hard work.
22 October 2016 - Sign Language Literacy Program for the Deaf

The Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea participated in the closing ceremony of the Zoba Maekel training in sign language organised by the Eritrean Association of the Deaf (EriNAD). The 6 month training programme was part of the project "Pilot Outreach Sign Language Literacy Program for the Deaf, their families and People working with the Deaf", funded by the European Union. EriNAD graduated 55 participants from Central Region. Certificates were handed to the participants. Similar training took place in all the 6 Zobas of Eritrea. The project also foresees awareness raising activities and information campaigns.

9 December 2016 – Human Rights Day and Photo Competition

International Human Rights day was celebrated for the 8th consecutive year. A reception was hosted by the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Eritrea on 9 December at Casa Degli Italiani. H.E Mr Osman Saleh, Eritrean Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs Christine Umutoni, UN Resident Coordinator, and Dr. Nicole Miller, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the EU Delegation to the State of Eritrea, delivered speeches during the event. Prizes were awarded to the winners of the photo competition entitled "Rural Women in Development" and an exhibition of the photos took place on the 10 and 11 December at the Casa Degli Italiani.
FEATURES:

EU Cooperation on Energy.
Georgina Ayre, EU Delegation

The objective of EU cooperation with Eritrea is to achieve sustainable social and economic development and in doing so improve the livelihoods of the Eritrean population through poverty reduction and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Access to electricity is a critical barrier to achieving these objectives, which generally only the 11th EDF is seeking to address through a range of interventions including increasing off-grid generation capacity and distribution, rehabilitating the electrical grid in Asmara as well as improving energy efficiency and increasing on-grid energy capacity.

Only 42% of the population of Eritrea have access to electricity, dropping to 11.9% in rural areas. It is for this reason that the Government of the State of Eritrea and the European Union agreed that for the first programme to be developed under EDF11 should be focused on rural electrification. In close consultation with the Government, the EU has developed a 73.9 million euro programme, which once implemented will deliver access to electricity to 225,000 beneficiaries in rural farming and fishing communities as well as to small to medium sized enterprises and to social sector services including schools, health care centres and government offices.

Geographically, the programme will deliver access to electricity to 21 villages across the Northern Red Sea region as far north as Nakfa and as far south as Marsa-Fatuma and as far west as Omahajer, some of the remotest and most difficult-to-reach areas outside the national grid. In terms of technology, the programme will use a mix of solar PV, batteries and diesel generators. This will allow the villages to have 24 hours of electricity supporting critical businesses such as ice-factories (for fisheries) as
well as improving the living standards of households who currently have no or limited access to electricity at home.

It is anticipated that the programme will be put out to tender by the end of 2017. In the meantime, the EU, together with the government, is developing programme documents to make good progress with the other energy components of the 11th EDF, in order that together we can be part of the energy solution here in Eritrea.

Collectively creating added value in food
Security cooperation – account from a field visit.
Geertrui Louwagie, EU Delegation

Having recently joined the EU Delegation in Asmara as cooperation officer in rural development and food security, I was keen (and still am) to see some of the activities the EU has been funding in its partnership with Eritrea. In addition to partnering with the host country, the EU also seeks synergies with other actors on the ground. The milk collection and cooling facility in Mendefera is the result of successful cooperation between the Government of Eritrea, IFAD and the EU. The centre has been in operation since 2000. It received a new cooling tank (with a capacity of 5,000 litres) and quality control laboratory equipment thanks to a grant from the EU Food Security Thematic Programme in 2009. The centre functions as a dairy cooperative. Membership contributions are based on the number of cows a farmer owns, while voting rights are equally distributed. Currently about 850 farmers deliver their milk to the centre. Mr Alemseghed Asghedom from the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr Okubazghi Kifle from the Zoba Debub government office and my colleague Yosief Kahsay made sure that our visit to the centre was planned during a moment of action: the time when farmers delivered their milk to the centre.

Indeed, the centre was buzzing with life that morning: farmers arrived at the facility, supplying the milk they did not need for their own consumption that day. Upon arrival, assistants diligently check the milk’s fat content and acidity to guarantee that the milk is of sufficient quality to be collected. Quantities delivered are recorded and form the basis for the payments to the farmers at the end of the month. Milk prices paid to farmers are usually stable for nine months up to over a year. However, they may change if production costs, such as fodder and fuel costs, vary too much.
The facility collects milk within a radius of about 25 km around Mendefera and currently receives around 2,500 litres per day. About 800 to 1,000 litres are transported to a dairy for processing into cheese and yoghurt, while the remainder of the fresh milk is sold directly to consumers in the town of Mendefera. The cooperative also facilitates animal feed distribution (e.g. by-products from brewing) among its members; allocations are proportional to the milk quantities farmers deliver. The facility is currently powered by the grid and a generator. Equipping this centre with solar power is planned with provisions from the 10th EDF financing agreement.