

Brussels, 3 July 2009

The European Commission allocates €40 mio to multi-country projects in Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus

The assistance package of €40mio will fund several programmes in different areas such as the strengthening of culture policies and civil society, support of SME networks, border management, air quality governance and disaster preparedness. All the projects to be financed with this programme will have a regional scope as they each will each benefit at least two of the seven partner states along the Eastern border of the EU (Russia, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia).

Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner commented: "I am pleased about the allocation of this assistance package of €40 mio to multi-country projects in the partner countries at our eastern borders. They share many challenges and a joint approach to tackling these challenges could help enhancing confidence among partner countries, thus contributing to increased security, stability, and prosperity in the region."

Commenting on one aspect of the assistance package she added: "I am particularly satisfied that through one component of this assistance package we can foster regional cooperation in the field of culture. Education and culture programmes are vital for laying the basis for political reforms, democracy and good governance. They enhance the exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas, and foster tolerance, dialogue and conciliation. A strong European investment in education and culture is therefore crucial to achieve the goals we pursue in our external relations."

Background

The assistance package will address the following areas:

Regional cooperation in the cultural sector can help to promote a more stable, secure and prosperous eastern neighbourhood. This part of the programme will allow civil society to play a more active role in regional cultural cooperation.

The contribution of SMEs to economic growth and development in the eastern Neighbourhood faces common constraints linked to a lack of inter-regional and international SME networking, funding mechanisms and weak business environments.

All countries face a range of environmental challenges, with air pollution in particular representing a significant health concern. The region is exposed to several disasters, some related to climate change, which could critically undermine regional efforts for sustainable development. It is therefore important to strengthen capacity in terms of prevention, preparedness and response efforts. This is one of the five flagship initiatives of the Eastern Partnership.

In the field of border and migration management, serious challenges are posed by organised crime, with large parts of the region constituting key smuggling and trafficking routes. Integrated Border Management is also a flagship initiative of the Eastern Partnership.

The allocations from the ENPI Annual Action Programmes are the main source of Community assistance for partner states along the Eastern border of the EU and the Mediterranean. The aim of the assistance is to promote enhanced cooperation and progressive economic integration between the European Union and the partner countries and, in particular, the implementation of partnership and cooperation agreements, association agreements or other existing and future agreements. Furthermore, the assistance shall also encourage partner countries' efforts aimed at promoting good governance and equitable social and economic development.

The assistance package of €40 mio has been committed from the 2009 EC budget in the framework of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

For more information:

ENPI Info Centre : http://www.enpi-info.eu/indexeast.php?lang_id=450

Download the ENPI East Regional Annual Action Programme 2009: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/ap/aap/2009_en.htm

On the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP): http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm

On the Eastern Partnership: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/index_en.htm