

«A new chapter in the EU-Jordan relationship» by Stefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy

We are about to enter into a new phase in the history of the Jordan and European Union's bilateral relations. **Jordan plays an important role in the region as a pole of peace and stability**, and in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean.

Indeed, the EU has acknowledged the efforts of Jordan to move forward with ambitious political and economic reforms. Jordan also enjoys a rich cultural heritage, political and social stability and a fast-growing economy. Its commitment to opening its market to competition has contributed boosting the economy and attracting foreign investments.

Thanks to its unique location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia connecting the East and the West, Jordan is positioning itself as a **regional gateway**, opening the doors to tremendous business opportunities.

For all these reasons Jordan can remain confident that the European Union will continue to support its endeavours to advance in its economic and social reform: to this effect, a **financial package** of €223 million is foreseen for 2011/2013, with an annual financial envelope of approximately € 74 million in addition to € 66 million for the period 2007/2010, i.e. an annual increase of over 12%. We hope this increased financial cooperation will act as a catalyst in strengthening Jordan's initiatives in areas such as renewable or alternative energy sources, transport infrastructure, local development and vocational training.

Despite a complex regional context, Jordan has clearly made impressive progress over the last few years. I am confident that the **unwavering commitment** shown in pursuing the economic reform process will be applied **also in the political field**. This is of paramount importance in order to increase and institutionalize public participation in decision-making and to maximise grass-roots participation. The key aspects from the EU perspective are the Parliament's role in the reform process as well as the legitimate high expectations that Jordanian citizens have in holding fair and transparent elections.

Certainly, our partnership is strong and constructive having been progressively built over the years. Jordan has always been a frontrunner among the Mediterranean Partners to embark on new association ties with the EU. Starting back in 1977 we have come a long way since the signature of the **Cooperation Agreement**. The **Association Agreement, which** entered into force in May 2002, defines the framework for the development of political dialogue, the creation of a progressive liberalization of trade in goods, services and capital and closer cooperation in a number of areas which are of mutual interest. A few years later, in 2005, we adopted the joint **ENP Action Plan** which allowed further deepening of our cooperation.

For example, over the period 2007/2009, thanks to the Erasmus Mundus Programme grants, 112 Jordanian students and academics were able to pursue studies in EU universities.

In 2009, Jordan and the EU signed a Science and Technology agreement which will help enhancing the cooperation in areas where joint efforts could be beneficial to both parties, such as participation in research programmes or exchange of scientists.

In March 2010, Jordan became the very first country of the Near East to conclude a comprehensive **civil aviation agreement** with the EU. This agreement will put in place common standards for air transport in order to reach the highest level of safety and security. It will lead to more routes being created throughout Europe and the Mediterranean and more competition meaning better connections and cheaper flights for both Jordanian and European citizens.

These concrete examples show that our relationship is constantly "on the move". Cooperation Agreement, Association Agreement and ENP Action Plan: these are **three milestones** in our bilateral relations each one of them marking a clear step forward in the process of strengthening ties.

In 2009, the EU and Jordan decided to deepen further this partnership by developing a **new ENP Action Plan** which will define the framework of our cooperation over the next years. Moving towards an **enhanced relationship** stems from the common objective of promoting peace, stability and prosperity and based on the core values the EU and Jordan share.

The EU stands ready to accompany Jordan on its journey towards an embracing society where growth, prosperity, political inclusion and social stability are seen as core objectives.