Euro-Mediterranean partnership: financial and technical measures to accompany (MEDA) the reform of economic and social structures

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Five years after its launch, the Barcelona Process and its MEDA Programme saw a substantial review in the year 2000. This happened against the backdrop of the worsening situation in the Middle East which had a considerable impact on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Two Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers conferences were held. Based on a Commission Communication, Ministers in Marseilles in November 2000 agreed on a series of measures to reinvigorate the Barcelona Process. The Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements with Morocco and Israel entered into force. Negotiations for the agreements resumed with Algeria, Lebanon and Syria. Ratification of the agreement with Jordan progressed while the obstacles to the initialling of the agreement with Egypt were removed and led to the Association Agreement's signature on 25 June 2001. In November the Council decided a major amendment to the MEDA regulation (MEDA II). The regulation provides for a strategic programming approach, reinforced dialogue with the partner countries and simplified procedures for faster delivery of aid. In this context, the Commission embarked on a wide-ranging reform of its external aid management which led to the creation of the EuropeAid Cooperation Office. As regards financial cooperation grants and loans committed for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership activities in 2000 totalled EUR 2.2 billion out of which a large share was supplied by the MEDA Programme. Parts of this sum were due to reconstruction aid following the 1999 earthquake in Turkey and recommitted funds from previous years. In 2000 committed MEDA funds amounted to EUR 879 million. Payments made up EUR 330.5 million (up from EUR 243 million in 1999). Commitments for the Maghreb totalled EUR 246 million, for the Mashrek EUR 163 million and for Turkey EUR 310 million; regional cooperation received funding of EUR 159 million in 2000. In addition, EUR 123 million were committed for the Mediterranean region from other EU budget lines. For 2000-2006 the Council decided to endow MEDA with EUR 5,350 million (laid down in the MEDA II regulation). These grants from the Community budget are accompanied by considerable lending from the European Investment Bank. For the same period the EIB's Euromed lending mandate is EUR 6,400 million. The Bank committed itself to contribute a further EUR 1,000 million from its own resources and at its own risk for transnational projects. In total, EUR 12.75 billion will be available for Euro-Mediterranean Partnership activities over the 7-year period starting from 2000.