



**Speech of Ambassador Christina Lassen, Head of the Delegation
of the European Union to Lebanon**

Horizon 2020 Information session

Thursday 15 February 2018, Bristol Hotel

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Mr. Mouïñ Hamzé, Secretary General of the Lebanese National Council for
Scientific Research (CNRS),

Director Russo,

Universities and business representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have good news this morning, as Dr Hamze mentioned, as only last week, the Council of Ministers approved the Lebanese participation in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area, or the PRIMA agreement, which makes Lebanon co-participant with **16** partner countries of a regional initiative launched by the European Union.

These two initiatives, Horizon 2020 and the PRIMA agreement, we believe are clear signs of the interest of the European Union to promote Innovation and Research in Lebanon, and we would like to see Lebanon making the most out of it.

I do not need to remind you that Lebanon faces serious challenges.. In spite of this, Lebanon has managed to stay attractive for innovators and researchers, but we believe that the potential is even bigger. For several reasons: Firstly, this country has always been recognised for its entrepreneurial dynamism and high level of its human capital and creativity. Secondly, Lebanese universities are highly regarded in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region. And finally, Lebanese people seem to have an incredible ability to never give up, but always move ahead.

We see this in practice these days as we watch a new generation of Lebanese entrepreneurs and SMEs dedicated to innovation, and the number of business incubators and accelerators active in the country is rising. But for innovators to thrive, we need good interaction between all actors, including public and private. We also need financial resources and skills. And luckily, there is a motivated private sector and government and institutions backing these efforts, such as the Central Bank with its financial incentives.

We must be optimistic, but we also need to be strategic. A competitive environment is on the rise. The performance of the education sector is improving in the region, where we see important steps forward. We see also how the enhancement of technical and vocational training systems is becoming a priority in many countries, including its adaptation to the current needs of the market. We witness universities in the region investing highly in human resources, equipment

and laboratories, especially in the Gulf. New promising sectors are on the rise, such as the green economy, depending much on innovation and technology.

It is therefore the right time for Lebanon to focus and keep pace with the developments in the region and in Europe. In all that, Lebanon can count on the support from the European Union,

With Horizon 2020 and PRIMA, Lebanon can benefit from a ‘push forward’ to put research and innovation at the heart of the economic vision for the country

Under Horizon 2020, Lebanon has so far participated in **13** agreements. The European Union would like to see this number go up as Director Russo said. We hope that during the sessions of today, our information on how to access funds and produce good quality proposals will give rise to new projects.

With the adoption of the PRIMA Agreement, Lebanon becomes participant, together with **16** countries from North and South in the Mediterranean region, in an ambitious programme which targets key areas directly affecting quality of life and creating conditions for inclusive, sustainable and healthy societies. In the case of Lebanon, PRIMA offers support for research and innovation linked to the sustainable management of water resources and foods systems. With a total of 220 M€ European funds, PRIMA becomes the most ambitious programme of its kind ever to be undertaken in the Mediterranean region, putting neighbours to work together, share know-how and experience and find innovative solutions to common challenges affecting day-to-day life of citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The European Union continues to stand ready to support Lebanon being at the forefront of innovation and progress in the region.

I sincerely thank the Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS) and Dr Hamze for their continued commitment to this longstanding partnership between the European Union and Lebanon, and the Directorate General for Research and Innovation, represented today by Director Cristina Russo, for their continuous engagement and support.

Thank you.