



European Commission

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The European Commission operates at the very heart of the European Union. Its role as the source of policy initiatives is unique; yet this role is not always clearly understood. The Commission has used its right of initiative to transform the framework provided by the treaties establishing the European Communities into today's integrated structures. The benefits for citizens and companies throughout the Union have been considerable - freedom of movement, greater prosperity, and much less red tape. The Commission consults widely with interested parties from all sectors and all walks of life when preparing draft legislation. In addition to its power of proposal, the Commission acts as the EU executive body and guardian of the Treaties. It represents the common interest and embodies, to a large degree, the personality of the Union. Its main concern is to defend the interests of Europe's citizens. The 20 members of the Commission are drawn from the 15 EU countries, but they each swear an oath of independence, distancing themselves from partisan influence from any source. The Commission's job is to ensure that the European Union can attain its goal of an ever-closer union of its members. One of the principal tasks here is to secure the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons throughout the territory of the Union. The Commission must also ensure that the benefits of integration are balanced between countries and regions, between business and consumers and between different categories of citizens. The European Commission comprises 29 Directorate Generals and services. Culture falls under the remit of the Education and Culture Directorate General, the three main aims of which are: to contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore; to encourage contemporary cultural creation; and to foster co-operation between the Member States and with third countries and competent international organisations. EU support for Afghanistan is set firmly within the context of the Bonn Agreement. The December 2001, April, July and December 2002 General Affairs Councils agreed that overall objectives for the EU and the EC in Afghanistan were to: promote the Bonn Agreement and its implementation by all groups; restore stability in Afghanistan as part of the international community efforts to crisis prevention; provide support for civil, social and military structures and services and aid for all those in need, especially refugees and displaced persons; promote democracy and the functioning of public institutions and thus promote the protection of Human Rights; give special attention to the inclusion of women as equal partners in Afghan society; insist that the Afghan authorities, in co-operation with the IMF, establish an effective and comprehensive macro-economic and monetary framework to ensure sustainable economic development and effective use of donor funding; give special attention to the inclusion of women in Afghan society; reinforce the fight against illegal drugs and terrorism; and promote co-operation with neighbouring countries in the successful reconstruction of Afghanistan. At the January 2002 Tokyo meeting of the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, the Commission pledged about €1 billion over five years in support of Afghanistan. This total indicative envelope is subject to yearly approval of funds by the budgetary authority. It is administered by ECHO.

[ECHO Humanitarian Aid Office, Kabul](#)