

Joint Border Crossing Point Muriqan-Sukobinë
Inauguration Ceremony
18th June 2009 - Muriqan

I am particularly glad to be participating in the inauguration of the very first joint border crossing point in the entire region.

€1.1 million from the European taxpayer, have, of course, not been invested by the European Commission simply to bring novelty, or a modern building to the Western Balkans.

Quite the contrary, this funding is an investment in peace and development.

The significance of this joint border crossing point is complex; it is political, economic and social all at once.

Politically speaking, this joint border crossing point between Albania and Montenegro is an initial step to replicate between two potential candidate countries the vote of confidence that EU Member States have given each other by eventually abolishing their borders altogether to allow the free movement of goods and services, persons and capital.

As Albania and Montenegro run this border crossing point harmoniously, as they jointly enforce the same standards of border control and management, they build confidence in each other opening the way to further cooperation.

Such cooperation and the building of mutual confidence are bound to have tangible economic benefits. Beyond mere regulation, the joint border crossing point will *facilitate* border activity between Albania and Montenegro with clear effects in the form of easier and faster movement of goods. Facilitated movement of goods and services is a basic pre-requisite for trade integration and economic development.

The movement of persons will also be greatly facilitated thus enabling both Albanians and Montenegrins to better enjoy the benefits of their no-visa regime.

And apart from economic opportunity, enhanced contact between the two peoples will open up social and cultural opportunities too, bringing these two countries closer together.

The EU perspective of the countries of the Western Balkans, a perspective of peace and stability, relies very much on regional cooperation - as does indeed the European Union itself. Joining efforts, expertise and capacities to regulate and facilitate border activity is an instance of such cooperation. This border-crossing - beyond its political, economic and social benefits - could also set standards and serve as a model for similar co-operation in the region.

In this sense I would like to extend my best wishes to all and everybody who are working to make the Muriqan-Sukobinë Joint Border Crossing Point a long-lasting success.

Thank you.