



CBIB
Cross Border Institution Building

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An EU - funded Project

Press Release

3rd Western Balkan Regional Cross-Border Cooperation Forum

Tirana, January 28th, 2010

On January 28th 2010, 3rd Regional Cross-Border Cooperation Forum was successfully organised in Tirana. The event gathered more than 100 representatives of both the European Commission and its Delegations and national institutions from the countries of the Western Balkans which are directly involved in cross-border cooperation under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).

Cross-border cooperation is taking place among the neighbouring regions of Western Balkan countries –Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia - for the first time under IPA. It serves the purpose of bringing together communities from the border areas in order to improve their economic, environmental and social development through joint projects, prepared in accordance with the rules of the European Commission.

The process was initiated in 2007, with the preparation of 8 cross-border programmes: Albania – Montenegro, Albania – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Bosnia and Herzegovina – Montenegro, Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia – Montenegro, Croatia – Serbia, Serbia – Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia - Montenegro.

Joint Management Structures, necessary for efficient programme management, implementation and monitoring, were set up during 2008. The first Calls for Proposals were launched in the summer of 2009 and the process of selection of grant applications received is currently ongoing in all Western Balkan countries. Total EC funding available for the projects under the first Calls for all 8 programmes amounts to €18.167.700.

Two previous Regional Forums took place in Zagreb (2007) and Skopje (2008). Such events provide a platform for discussions among the representatives of national institutions and the European Commission on the most important issues related to the management and implementation of cross-border programmes and related procedures. Moreover, they create the opportunity for all stakeholders to exchange experience, best practices and find solutions for common problems.

The Forum held in Tirana provided an insight into the first results of the Calls for Proposals and generated discussions on how to approach the planning and implementation for the second round of Calls expected in 2010. Furthermore, issues related to the implementation of first cross-border projects were clarified and future steps agreed.

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The Tirana Forum, just as the two previous ones, was organised by CBIB – Cross Border Institution Building, the regional Technical Assistance project of the European Commission. Recognising the need to aid the regional stakeholders in the Western Balkans, the European Commission launched the project in June 2006, which is currently in its second phase, envisaged to last until May 2010. The efforts of the project team are aimed at strengthening capacities of national and programme structures for IPA CBC on the one hand, and enhancing project preparation and implementation capacities of potential applicants, on the other hand.

Moreover, CBIB ensures regional coordination and acts as a cohesion factor enabling a balanced approach necessary for the countries to reach common benchmarks and to steer the complex process forward.

The project operates from the main office in Belgrade and four regional offices in Tirana, Sarajevo, Struga and Kotor.

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