



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union

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Strumica, 4th of April 2012

**Official Launch of the IPA CBC Programme Greece – the former
Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
(2nd Call for Project Proposals)**

4 April 2012, 10:30 hours

Ambassador Aivo Orav
Head of the EU Delegation

Dear Minister Bejta,

Dear State Secretary Andonovski,

Dear Mayors,

Dear Mr. Emmanouil,,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- It is my honour and pleasure to be here today with you on the occasion of the launch of the second Call for Proposals in the Cross-border Cooperation programme.
- The experience of the European Union proves that the development of border regions is a key factor of European integration and economic and social cohesion. However, cooperation across frontiers is a difficult and rarely spontaneous process. The authorities and structures concerned, at different levels of government and power, must get used to working together.

Obstacles need to be overcome. These have to do with differences in political institutions, administrative systems and procedures, legal structures and technical and environmental standards.

- The Cross Border Cooperation financial instruments developed by the European Union do contribute to overcoming the barriers to economic and social development of border regions. They do so by putting the people at the heart of the cooperation process.
- The empowerment of the people at local level governs also the implementation of the present Programme. The objective of the Cross Border Cooperation between the two countries is to promote

sustainable local development in the cross border area in support of the wider European Cooperation and Integration efforts.

- One of the most important aspects of cooperation across frontiers is the ‘multiplier effect’ that it produces, the energies that it mobilises and the experience gained from it. To improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the people living in the region, Cross Borders Programmes help to improve the living conditions of the population while building economic and personal bonds, the cornerstone of their future prosperity.
- So today we are launching the second Call for Proposals under this Programme. In the first round 18 projects were selected. Their contracts have recently been signed and implementation should soon reach cruising speed. They cover a wide spectrum of sectors, ranging from economic cooperation and environmental projects to tourism development and cultural exchange projects.
- Under this second Call for Proposals, the EU has reserved a total of 11 million euro. Combined with the necessary co-financing of the project beneficiaries, the total available budget for the projects can go up to around 14 million euro.
- It is now up to you, the municipalities, the Chambers of Commerce, the health institutions, environmental organisations, as potential beneficiaries on both sides, to seek fruitful partnerships and submit good, sustainable, joint projects.
- I am fully aware that the regulatory framework for EU-financial assistance is complex, often too complex, especially for this type of

cross border programme between a Member State and a Candidate Country.

Hence, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the national authorities for having overcome all the obstacles encountered in implementing this programme so far. I am convinced that what we have already achieved today would not have been possible without the open and strong cooperation developed across the border by the respective authorities of both countries.

Likewise I have no reason to doubt that all present today have the firm intention to continue their cooperation, not only the ministries involved, but also the many institutions, municipalities, companies and NGO's, being the future partners in the projects under this Call.

- It is this partnership effort in stretching the hand of friendship between neighbouring communities on both sides of the border which is the guarantee of success.
- The spirit of cooperation and friendship thus created will become permanent and will generate new energy for a prosperous future in a wider Europe.
- I am pleased to see a great number of people in the audience, which is an indication of the interest of potential applicants in the programme. This will certainly contribute to enhance the quality of the proposals as the next parts of this info day will relate to the technical and administrative aspects of the application form.

Thank you very much for your attention!