



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union

Bitola, 9 October 2012

**Photo exhibition: "Water and Mountains in the Cross-Border Area"
on the occasion of
the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) Day in
Bitola**

Speaking points
Ambassador Aivo Orav
Head of the EU Delegation

**Dear Representatives of both CBC Managing Authorities
Ms Mehmeti Petersen and Mr Salonidis,
Dear Mayor Taleski,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to be with you today, at the official opening of the photo exhibition: **Water and Mountains in the Cross-Border Area** that has been organised on the occasion of the European Territorial Cooperation Day.

The European Union has developed various instruments to support the territorial cooperation in Europe. One of them is the **IPA Cross Border Cooperation Programme** aimed to prepare candidate countries for future management of EU Structural Funds. At the institutional level, the Cross Border Cooperation Programme with Greece is jointly managed by the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes from Thessaloniki and by the Ministry of Local Self Government from Skopje.

In this programme, participating partners, such as municipalities, regional development structures and civil society **implement joint projects** by combining expertise and resources.

This enables cross-border activities to support local economic development, build small-scale infrastructure, protect the environment and promote cultural exchanges between neighbouring countries.

The Cross Border Cooperation Programme with Greece is implemented through public call for proposals. In 2010, the **first call** was launched, resulting with 18 projects, with a total value of approximately 2 million EUR, allocated to the partners from this side of the border. National authorities contribute up to 15% to the budget of the projects.

A **second call for proposals** was launched early this year, with a budget of approximately 4,8 million EUR, to be allocated to the partners from the country.

One of the awarded CBC projects is implemented by the Cultural Art Organisation "Stiv Naumov" from Bitola and today we will have the pleasure to enjoy their performance. This project is a good example of reinforced cooperation between both countries in the cultural sphere.

The other areas of project activities are devoted to:

- environmental preservation;
- valorisation of natural regional resources; and
- promotion of cultural exchanges.

All over Europe, almost 300 events are being organised in 40 countries in the frame of the European Cooperation Day campaign promoting Territorial Cooperation. The city of Bitola joins this initiative, too. This indicates the interest of the national and regional authorities, as well as of the civil society, in a reinforced cooperation across the European borders that I am happy to praise today.

Thank you very much for your attention.