



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union

Skopje, 30 January 2014

## **Press Conference**

### **Partners in Reforms: Overview and current status of EU assistance implementation**

**[SEA premises]**

Speaking points

Ambassador Aivo Orav

Head of EU Delegation

**Dear Deputy Prime Minister Mr Besimi,  
Dear Ms Kaljoseska, Dear Martin,  
Ladies and Gentleman,**

Allow me to express my highest appreciation for the initiative of the Deputy Prime Minister and National IPA Coordinator Mr. Besimi for organizing this press conference that aims to provide an overview and current status of EU assistance implementation in the country. This press conference is a first step in our joint efforts to increase transparency, accountability and ownership of the EU integration process.

Last year, we marked six years of the creation of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance. Looking back at the road we have traveled, allow me to say the following:

The enlargement process was and remains to be a promoter of important reforms in the country, and the IPA assistance, with an overall allocation of **614 million EUR**, is the mechanism to support these reforms. As a response to the country's EU agenda, including the High Level Accession Dialogue, EU assistance is provided for the key political, economic and development reforms that are part of the Copenhagen Criteria and the Cohesion Policy.

Since the 2009 transfer of responsibilities in management of IPA funds, the country has been put in front of many challenges. One of them is the need of structural reforms and further enhancement of administrative capacities in order to increase the contracting rate and prevent de-commitment of funds, which was the case in 2013, whereas approximately **20 million EUR** were de-committed.

The challenges we are facing include absorption difficulties where institutions are endowed with limited staff – in terms of quality and in some cases quantity. The direct link between the assistance and readiness of the institutions is essential to ensure sustainability of the results. What is needed is a proactive ownership, partnership with the EU and long-term commitment.

In the past years, the government has made significant efforts to increase the absorption of IPA funds. We hope that the figures for absorption would rise in areas such as agriculture and human resource development, and further accelerate the pace of the projects relevant for institutional building.

The 2013 results would guide us in our joint efforts to constantly improve the impact on the ground. IPA funds must be used to its maximum, to achieve maximum results. The efficiency of their use is essential to the enlargement process. As partners in

this process, the European Union stands ready to further support the country in the necessary reforms towards EU membership.

In the period 2014-2020, EU will ensure continuation of its support making even closer links between the Enlargement Strategy and the priorities for financial assistance. The allocated funds for the next period would be comparable with those of the past seven years.

At the end, let me once again emphasize the European Union's political and financial commitment in supporting the country in achieving the necessary reforms, shared values and fulfilling the same ambition – EU membership.

Thank you very much for your attention.