



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union

Skopje, 22 October 2012

**Signature of the IPA 2011 Financing Agreement of the
Cross-border Programme with Kosovo (Under UNSCR
1244/1999)**

(Government building, Skopje)

Speech by

H.E. Mr. Aivo Orav

Head of EU Delegation

Deputy Prime Minister Arifi,

Deputy Prime Minister Citaku,

Mr. Stock,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be here with you today to sign the Financing Agreement for this cross-border programme with Kosovo (so defined under UNSCR 1244/1999).

The experience of the European Union proves that the development of border regions is a key factor of European integration. The cross-border cooperation financial instruments developed by the European Union contribute to overcoming the barriers to **economic and social development between border regions.**

However, cooperation without frontiers is a difficult and rarely spontaneous process that requires all authorities and structures concerned to work together to share common opportunities or tackle common challenges.

Even when mutual problems inherited from the past are done away with, there are still major obstacles that need to be overcome. For example, differences in political institutions, administrative systems and procedures, legal structures, technical and environmental standards.

By overcoming these obstacles, they are able to implement cooperation projects that bring people together from sometimes very different horizons. They help build trust. They foster mutual understanding. These are cornerstones for any long-term partnership. They are essential ingredients of European integration.

The **European Union is financing five cross-border programmes** between this country with its neighbours. Over the period 2007 to 2013 over **25 million EUR have been earmarked for cross-border programmes** thus underlying the importance that the European Union gives to the economic and social development of border regions.

This Cross-border Programme we are signing today has the objective of promoting sustainable development in the cross-border area. Joint actions and cross-border projects will have an impact on the social and economic situation of the population, improve the joint management and valorisation of human, natural and cultural resources and strengthen the image and the cohesion of the region.

The EU funds are allocated for the implementation of actions within **three measures**:

1. Economic development;

2. Sustainable environmental development; and

3. Social cohesion.

Potential **beneficiaries of the programme** will be non-profit making organisations, local and regional authorities, associations, foundations and chambers of commerce.

I trust these funds will significantly contribute to the development of cross-border areas to the benefit of their citizens.

Thank you very much for your attention.