



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union

Skopje, 29 January 2015

**Inauguration Ceremony of the First Grant Contracts  
under the CBC Programme between the former  
Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo**

EU InfoCentre  
EU Delegation, Skopje

Speaking points  
Ambassador Aivo Orav  
Head of EU Delegation

**Dear Minister Shabani,  
Dear General Secretary Osmani,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to be here today to jointly inaugurate the first generation of EU funded grant projects contracted under the Cross-border Cooperation programme with Kosovo.

Cross-border cooperation is about empowering people on both sides of the border to cooperate and improve the economic, social and environmental conditions at local level.

It supports sustainable development and helps reduce differences in living standards and address common challenges. Such cooperation facilitates the generation of social capital, trust and mutual understanding among the communities in the neighbourhood region.

The economic and personal bonds that are being built are actually the cornerstones of the future prosperity of their region. This is an important element in building the 21st century Europe.

Hence, the Cross Border Cooperation is a key element of the EU policy towards its neighbors. Active, committed and effective cross-border cooperation between the enlargement countries,

EU Member States and other partners within the Western Balkans plays a vital role in the EU integration process.

The great number of people present today is just a confirmation of the intention of both countries to continue their cooperation; not only at the level of the ministries involved, but also between municipalities, educational and public institutions and civil society organisations.

Under the first Call of this CBC programme, based on the available portfolio, six (6) grant projects were contracted, totalling to 2.16 million EUR. In the coming 18 to 24 months, the selected projects will be focusing on joint activities on both sides of the border, ranging from social economic cooperation and environment to tourism development and culture, health protection and gender equality. The institutions that will implement these projects range from municipalities to civil society organisations and educational institutions.

But, what was achieved by now would not have been possible without the open and strong cooperation developed across the border by the respective authorities.

We commend both Governments for being professional and effective in implementing this cross border programme. This goes in particular to increasing awareness amongst local

authorities, civil society and other institutions about seizing the opportunity to launch common initiatives and contribute to the development and prosperity of their neighbourhood region.

I congratulate the CBC grantees and wish you all a successful and fruitful work!