

Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) 2007-2013

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This Staff Working Document accompanies the Commission 2013 Annual Report on Financial Assistance for Enlargement (IPA, PHARE, CARDS, Turkey Pre-Accession Instrument, Transition Facility). It presents an overview of the achievements of IPA in 2013.

A summary of the main achievements is as follows:

Croatia: since 1 July 2013, Croatia is an EU Member State. Croatia's accession is an example of the transformative power and stabilising effect of the enlargement process. The implementation of EU financial assistance in 2012/2013 provided further support for completing reforms and building up capacity in the crucial areas within the membership perspective, namely judiciary, fundamental rights and justice, freedom and security. It further supported continued efforts of preparing Croatia for the management and implementation of post-accession funds.

An increasing policy focus has been put on improving the adaptability of enterprises and workers since 2011. A new priority axis has been introduced in 2012 targeting civil society organizations and the promotion of social dialogue.

Montenegro: progress was made in the accession negotiations. In June 2013, the country adopted comprehensive action plans for chapters 23 and 24. Five chapters were opened in December 2013, including the important rule of law related chapters 23 and 24, bringing the total to 7 opened chapters, of which 2 were provisionally closed. The screening meetings with Montenegro were concluded in June 2013.

During 2013 Montenegro put significant efforts in the process of conferral of management for decentralised implementation of IPA funds.

Serbia: the decision by the June 2013 European Council to open accession negotiations with Serbia followed the historic agreement between Serbia and Kosovo, reached in April 2013 in the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue. Subsequently, in December 2013, the Council adopted the negotiating framework for accession negotiations and set the date for the first Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) which took place in January 2014. The IPA 2013 Annual Programme was adopted in December 2013 and active preparations for IPA II have taken place throughout the year. Subsequently, the decision was taken in March 2014.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: in October 2013, for the fifth year in a row, the Commission recommended the opening of accession negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Council has not yet decided on the Commission's proposal. Given the high level of alignment with the acquis, the focus is on implementing already existing strategies and legislation and on improving related administrative capacity. The management of IPA funds under the Decentralised Implementation System remained challenging for the national authorities throughout 2013 due to understaffing and insufficient managerial capacities in key institutions.

The year 2013 was dedicated to the preparation of the IPA II Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020.

Albania: in 2013, the Commission recommended that candidate status be granted to Albania on the understanding that the country continues to take action in the fight against organised crime and corruption. Candidate status was subsequently granted in June 2014. During 2013, EU financial assistance played a strategic role in the country, deploying approximately EUR 96 million with a view to enhancing administrative capacities of a number of institutions and fostering social, environmental and economic development.

The emphasis of the Enlargement strategy on the policy areas of judiciary and fundamental rights (chapter 23), and justice, freedom and security (chapter 24) has strengthened the focus of the Albanian Government on improving rule of law in the country through concrete achievements. Infrastructure projects, however, still encounter implementation problems.

The year 2013 was also dedicated to the preparation of the IPA II Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: the Commission came to the conclusion that the country is at a standstill in the European integration process. The Commission stated that it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify the provision of pre-accession funds to a country whose political representatives are not willing to reach the consensus necessary to move forward on the pre-accession path.

This stalemate in the accession process affected the programming and the implementation of IPA assistance. In particular, in view of the absence of an EU coordination mechanism and an increasing politicisation of IPA implementation, the Commission decided to suspend several IPA projects in the course of 2013 and eventually to cancel two projects in the agriculture and rural development sector.

Consequently, the Commission reduced the budget of the IPA 2013 allocation. The preparations for IPA II did not restart in 2013.

Kosovo: in June 2013, the Council authorised the opening of negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with Kosovo, which were officially launched in October 2013. The implementation of EU assistance exceeded its financial targets, both in terms of contracts and payments in 2013. The 2013 Annual Programme was adopted in January 2013 with an allocation of EUR 65.86 million.

Kosovo's participation in Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) programmes progressed well in 2013. The Financing Agreements for 2012 were signed for all three CBC programmes (with Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Montenegro respectively). The first call for proposals with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was launched.

During 2013, the Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020 was prepared.

Turkey: the Positive Agenda has brought fresh dynamism to EU – Turkey relations. The accession process regained new momentum with the opening of a new chapter (22, on regional policy). In December 2013, the readmission agreement between the EU and Turkey was signed and the visa liberalization dialogue initiated. Despite political turmoil in this country, the impact on the programming process was controlled and work on the new Strategy Paper for the full duration of the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020 proceeded as foreseen. Regarding the management of the ongoing financial assistance by the Turkish national authorities under decentralised management mode, conferral of management for IPA Component V (agriculture and rural development) was granted to further 22 provinces throughout Turkey, raising to 42 the number of accredited agencies in the country.

However, as far as the implementation of IPA programmes is concerned, persisting delays have been registered.

Iceland: the government of Iceland announced its decision to put accession negotiations on hold on 22 May 2013. By that time substantial progress had been made in the negotiations: 27 chapters had been opened and 11 were provisionally closed. As a consequence, the Commission stopped engaging on new commitments under IPA and started to phase out ongoing IPA projects. In agreement with the government, all preparatory work on IPA II was also suspended.