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Kosovar Civil Society Foundation

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[STATE OF PLAY AND MAIN CHALLENGES FOR KOSOVO ON THE WAY TO THE EUROPEAN MEMBERSHIP]

POLICY RESEARCH

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The European Union



European Agency for Reconstruction

Civil Society Organizations in Support of
Kosovo's European and Regional Integration

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ABOUT KCSF

Mission

An independent, not-for-profit organization, focused in supporting local civil initiatives leading to a strong civil society movement that will promote a democratic culture and will be responsive to the socio-economic needs of Kosovo, with a strong focus on supporting and contributing to the EU Integration process.

Programs and Activities

Through focus on European Integration KCSF board of governance aims to promote better knowledge of the functioning of the EU, raise public awareness and promote dialogue on the project of European Integration. Communication and information activities aim to facilitate a better understanding, coherence and consistence in the approach towards European Integration. The target groups to be reached consist of: civil society, civil administration, public and private sector, media, academia and targeted professional associations.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 270 PROJECTS GRANTED
- 403 SCHOLARSHIPS FOR RAE STUDENTS
- 15 PUBLICATIONS
- MORE THAN 100 BASIC AND ADVANCED TRAININGS
- 260 GRADUATES FROM EUROPEAN INTEGRATION SCHOOL

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Scope of Work:

Information on European Integration Process

- EU Resource Centre and Newsletter
- Support the Implementation of the Government Communication Strategy

Improved Knowledge on European Integration

- European Integration School
- Capacity Building for CSOs in European Integration
- Tailored Trainings for CSOs, Media, Political Parties and Administration
- Media Support Programs

Provision of Analyses related to European Integration Process

- Research and Publications
- Public Debates
- Experts Roundtable and Policy Recommendations

Cooperation with countries in the Region and EU in relation to European Integration

- Knowledge Transfer about Regional and EU Integration
- Promotion of Regional Cooperation in the field of EI
- Networking and Sectorial Partnerships

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1. EU POLICY GEARED TOWARD THE WESTERN BALKANS

In 1999 the European Union (EU) developed the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) as the main policy framework for European path of the Western Balkan (WB) countries, all the way to their future possible accession. Among other instruments, the Stabilisation and Association process includes the Stabilisation and Association Agreements: a contractual relationship offered by the EU-in return for compliance with the relevant conditions. This represents a new dimension in the relations with WB countries, offering a prospect of membership to EU. It includes asymmetric trade liberalization, economic and financial assistance, budgetary assistance and balance of payment support, assistance for democratization and civil society, humanitarian aid for refugees, returnees and other persons of concern, cooperation in justice and home affairs, development of a political dialogue. Finally, this framework aims to bring peace, stability and economic development to the region and open the perspective of integration in the EU.

The perspective of WB for membership is clear.¹ It was initially launched in the European Council meeting in Feira on 19 and 20 June 2000², in which EC recognized the countries concerned by the Stabilisation and Association Process to be potential candidates for EU membership. This was further reaffirmed in Zagreb (2000) and Copenhagen Summits (2002). Finally, in June 2003, the Thessaloniki EU-Western Balkans summit confirmed the EU's support for the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries.

The Summit endorsed *"The Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans: Moving towards European Integration"*³, which aims at further strengthening the privileged relations between the EU and the region, also drawing on the enlargement experience.⁴ The EU's enriched SAP, namely the European Partnerships, visa liberalization, regional initiatives, community programs and enhanced political dialogue, will remain the framework for the European course of the WB countries all the way to their future accession.

Inspired by the work and the progress achieved within SAP, the EU introduced the European Partnerships, including Kosovo. European Partnerships are instruments to assess countries needs and priorities across sectors. They identify, on regular basis, priorities and obligations to be fulfilled. EU financial assistance is directed to the priorities set out in these partnerships. Each country draws up a national action plan for implementation of the partnerships, which on the other side provides a clear agenda to measure the progress. In addition, the "regatta principle" applies, whereby each country is assessed in terms of its own capacity to meet the criteria

¹ Feira, Zagreb and Thessaloniki EU Council Conclusions

² COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 2666/2000 of 5 December 2000

³ For more See < http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/gacthess.htm > 12, February 2005.

⁴ Presidency Conclusions - Thessaloniki, 19 and 20 June 2003, See: < http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/76279.pdf > 12, February 2005.

set for membership⁵. In June 2005 the European Council reaffirmed its commitment to implement the Thessaloniki agenda, noting that each country's progress towards European integration depends on its efforts to comply with the Copenhagen criteria and the conditionality of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP).⁶

2. THE EUROPEAN FUTURE OF KOSOVO

The EU-WB Summits' were very successful as they opened a new era for the countries of the SAP and reassured the EU perspective for the region, including Kosovo. The enriched Thessaloniki agenda and introduction of European Partnerships and other enlargement process instruments intensified EU vs. Kosovo relations. The key relations between the two are defined in the European Partnership for Kosovo, whereas Kosovo participates in various SAP instruments.

The unresolved international status for Kosovo continues to hinder its full commitment to the EI process. To achieve the ultimate goal of the Stabilisation and Association process, which is integration into the European Union, the EU has to establish *contractual relations* with its partners. The possibility of negotiating a fully fledged Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo is not on the table at present. However, the European Commission is committed to exploring creative ways to ensure that Kosovo can fully benefit from all EU instruments, and – depending on the outcome of status talks – in due course engage in contractual relations with the Union as appropriate.⁷ In this respect, Kosovo needs to argue for formal inclusion in the SAP and SAA negotiations. There is an urgent need for devising a Roadmap for the European Integration process based on analysis of administrative and political capacities of Kosovo's institutions.

Kosovo has a European future, provided that there is clear and permanent government commitment thereof EU integration becomes the top priority. In order to succeed in the EU integration process Kosovo needs to build a strong link between political and decision making bodies with administrative, operational and technical level to implement and deliver on policies agreed.

Kosovo has been facing a unique challenge and opportunity – it has to pursue internal reforms that would contribute to a classical national state building that is simultaneously transforming into a future EU member-state. In that endeavor, Kosovo would have another unique opportunity – it will be the only acceding country that the EU would guide and prepare for the membership from inside the county, as the EU is foreseen to have

⁵ Copenhagen Criteria and other EU conditionality

⁶ Communication from the Commission. "The Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidating stability and raising prosperity" 27.01.2006.

⁷ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION "A European Future for Kosovo" COM (2005) 156, Brussels, 20.04.2005, p. 4

a big role in the supervision of Kosovo final status settlement.⁸ However, all in Kosovo must be aware that the European integration process by its nature is to be owned and carried out by the inside stakeholders. It is a comprehensive and all encompassing process that can be successfully accomplish only as a common endeavor of all competent institutions and a society as a whole.⁹

3. KOSOVO IN THE STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION PROCESS

The vehicle currently keeping Kosovo firmly anchored in the EU policy for the Western Balkans is the *Stabilisation and Association Process Tracking Mechanism* (STM). This mechanism was set up in November 2002 aiming to assist Kosovo authorities to benefit fully from the core elements of the Stabilisation and Association Process, notably, EU assistance, policy advice, monitoring of EU standards and trade concessions.

Within SAP the conditionality is the EU's most powerful instrument when dealing with the candidate¹⁰ and potential candidate¹¹ countries. Conditionality is EU's policy directed to the countries of the region as an effective instrument conditioned for EU membership.

In this respect, the prospect of Kosovo for EU membership, apart of a legal status allowing for contractual relations at a state level, clearly lies, same as for any country willing to join the EU, behind the completion of the Copenhagen Criteria¹². They require that Kosovo¹³:

- Has stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and the protection of minorities;
- Has a functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;
- Has the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to aims of political, economic and monetary union, *i.e. Acquis Communautaire*.

⁸ Comprehensive proposal of Marti Ahtissari for Kosovo final status settlement.

⁹ Quote from Neven Mimica, "Experts Roundtable Conclusions and Recommendations" 21, April 2007

¹⁰ Croatia, Turkey and FYR of Macedonia

¹¹ Albania, BiH, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo as defined under 1244 UNSCR.

¹² Membership requirements are laid down in Copenhagen European Summit, See: < http://ue.the.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/72921.pdf > p. 14.

¹³ These are three basic criteria. The Copenhagen criteria include also: "the country to have created the conditions for its integration through the adjustment of its administrative structures". See D Hall & D Danta: "*Enlargement*", quoted in D Hall & D Danta., (ed) (2000) "**Europe Goes East: EU enlargement, diversity and uncertainty**", London: The Stationary Office, p. 378.

EU conditionality is an asymmetrical process, where conditions are defined exclusively by the EU and must be accepted unconditionally. Out of three criteria, the most expensive and time consuming is the transposition of the *acquis communautaire*. It's alignment with national laws and policies usually results with high costs, economic disturbances and headache in implementation. Kosovo's capability and capacity is rather limited to meet the demands required from the EU, and much weaker compared with countries in the region.

The legal basis for the approximation of Kosovo's legislation with *Acquis* is contained in section 5.7 of Constitutional Framework for Provisional Institution of Self-Government (PISG) of Kosovo. It requires them to align their legislation and practices in all areas of responsibility with relevant European and international standards and norms¹⁴.

According to the UNMIK Administrative Direction 2006/6 the Agency for European Integration is the responsible institution to coordinate and oversee the approximation of Kosovo's legislation with *Acquis Communautaire*¹⁵. However, for the time being Kosovo is not fully approximating its legislation with *Acquis*, currently the Kosovo's legislation is only undergoing through the procedure of compatibility checking, meaning that AEI is checking only if a draft law does or does not violate the general principles of the *Acquis Communautaire*.

The approximation of legislation is of a high importance and it should be treated very seriously. It is a complex and dynamic process which requires sustainable and appropriate rules and mechanisms. On the other side capacities to carry out this process are very limited and an urgent action in recruitment of young professionals with EU legislation background is needed.

The approximation of legislation is part of the whole EU integration process and has to be considered as such. In terms of legislation process there is a necessity to adopt a National Plan for the Approximation of Kosovo's legislation which serves as a tool for coordination, planning and reporting of approximation process.

On the other side, the process of approximation is to be either preceded or at least occurring in parallel with the translation of the *Acquis*. The process of *Acquis* translation not only helps the approximation process but is also a condition to be fulfilled for EU membership. Possible ways of cooperation should be explored with other SAp countries which share the same languages. Such cooperation would contribute: firstly, in diminution of the costs, secondly, in preventing the duplication of the work and accelerating the process, and finally in using equal legal terminology.

With regards to conditionality and alignment a pragmatic decision is taken for Kosovo. EU can only negotiate a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with a fully sovereign and functional state, in order to circumvent this

¹⁴ UNMIK/REG/2001/9, Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self –Government, 15 May 2001

¹⁵ UNMIK Administrative Direction 2006/6

dilemma and not to complicate the SAA preparations with Serbia and Montenegro, the EU has set up STM for Kosovo.¹⁶ As part of this process Kosovo stays in track with SAp as well as gains EU support towards accomplishing the required set of standards, namely the European integration criteria. The main aim of STM is to support Kosovo in its EU-compatible structural reforms through advice and guidance. This instrument has helped Kosovo firmly on track in its progress towards European structures.

The day to day work of STM is conducted by the Agency for European Integration (AEI) within the Office of the Prime Minister. This agency is established by UNMIK Administrative Direction 2006/06 and it is *“responsible for coordination of Government actions in aligning practices and legislative activities with relevant European Union (EU) norms and standards in the context of the EU Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) with a view to facilitating economic, social and other reforms and capacity-building to support Kosovo’s involvement in European integration processes”*¹⁷.

For its purposes, AIE has established a mechanism through which it coordinates activities among line ministries and governmental agencies. This mechanism is spread across line ministries in the form of Offices for European Integration, which functions as focal points and reference offices for all EU related activities. This network is mainly facilitated to draft progress-reports and organize STM meetings, but also to report to European Commission on different issues. The government has established political and sectorial Working Groups to coordinate the work, implement, report and monitor the implementation of the European Partnership Action Plan.

Due to the unresolved status, negotiating a fully fledged Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo is not on the table yet. Irrespectively of the potential outcome out of developments in the status negotiations process, Kosovo in the SAp should continue to make progress. Kosovo has reached a stage when status decision process is to be irreversibly linked with the EU integration process. Kosovo institutions have to take initiative in arguing that the STM process has reached its limits and it is to be succeeded by formal inclusion of Kosovo in the SAA. In this course, a proposal for an early feasibility report as a step towards preparation for an SAA is recommended, in particular considering that comprehensive understanding of the Kosovo situation exists due to EU presence there since 1999.

In short, a positive feasibility report should lead to the conclusion that Kosovo has made sufficient progress in meeting prerequisites and developed capacities to start negotiating an SAA. The next stage then is to negotiate and implement the SAA.

Further steps should be defined in a Roadmap for the European Integration process, based on a thorough analysis of political, legal, economic and administrative capacities of Kosovo’s institutions.

¹⁶ Wim van Meurs & Stefani Weiss op. cit. p. 6.

¹⁷ UNMIK Administrative Direction 2006/06, Article 2.1

4. THE EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FOR KOSOVO

During the last years, a considerable progress has been achieved in the WB. In reward, the European Partnerships were drawn in 2004 for each SAp country, inspired by the accession partnerships for candidate countries, and adapted to the specificities of the SAp. European partnerships identify priorities for action in supporting efforts to move closer to the European Union and serve as a checklist to measure progress, and to provide guidance for Community and bilateral financial assistance. In response to this identification of priorities, the authorities are requested to draw up an Action Plan for the implementation of the European Partnership, which provides an agenda against which to measure progress of the countries in meeting European standards.

The EU Council of Ministers adopted in June 2004 the first European Partnership with Serbia and Montenegro including Kosovo¹⁸. On 30 January 2006 the Council of the European Union adopted a new partnership that has been adapted to reflect the progress made over the year and to address new challenges and priorities for Kosovo. In both cases, Kosovo institutions, like all other countries in the SAp, were asked to develop an action plan to address implementation of European Partnership Priorities (EPP). The first European Partnership Action Plan (EPAP) for Kosovo was prepared in January 2005. In reply to the second European Partnership, the Kosovo Government prepared and on 9 of august 2006¹⁹ adopted the Kosovo European Partnership Action Plan 2006. Kosovo EPAP 2006 includes the essence of Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan (KSIP), which is an integral part of the plan. Mutually reinforcing processes come into being when the priority standards and related KSIP actions match the European Partnership short term priorities.

The priorities listed in the European Partnership have been selected on the basis that it is realistic to expect Kosovo can carry out or take them substantially forward over the next years. A distinction is made between short-term priorities, which are expected to be accomplished within one to two years, and medium-term priorities, which are expected to be accomplished within three to four years.²⁰ As the financing is supported by Instrument for Pre Accession (IPA), the assistance is conditional on further progress in satisfying the Copenhagen criteria, whereas monitoring is ensured through the STM mechanisms, notably annual EC Progress Reports.

In the Partnership Agreement for Kosovo the priorities which need attention include: democracy and rule of law, ensure full cooperation with ICTY, enhance regional cooperation, define macro-economic priorities and revitalize the privatization, internal market and trade issues, sectorial policies such as agriculture, environment,

¹⁸ As defined under UNSCR 1244

¹⁹ **Kosovo European Partnership Action Plan 2006**, 09 08 2006

²⁰ Regulation on the Establishment of the **European Partnerships** in the Framework of the Stabilization and Association Process (EC No 533/2004), 22 March 2004. **European Partnership** with Serbia and Montenegro including Kosovo as defined by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999.

transport and energy, and co-operation in justice and home affairs. In all cases, Kosovo has devised measures and action to make progress in the alignment towards EU compatible policies.

The European Partnership covering chapters of political, economic and *acquis* criteria is an excellent exercise for Kosovo to deepen its legislative alignment with compatible EU norms and principles. At this stage, fulfilling the SAp conditionality on planning, execution, reporting and respecting timetable of measures and actions show Kosovo's readiness to engage in more congruent alignment, eventually towards an SAA. However, Kosovo should take maximum caution in alignment and transposition of laws and policies with its administrative, technical and financial capabilities to do so. A respectful and competent central government mechanism needs to be up and running. The Agency for European Integration needs to be upgraded into a Ministry for European Integration with a strong coordination and facilitation role, whereas the implementation shall lie with the line ministries. This body needs to become central point of information and communication with Brussels services and enjoy sufficient, sustainable and competent staff.

Successful EPAP implementation is impeded by weak administrative capacities. Drafting new laws which are compatible with *acquis* often requires special skills and experience. Kosovo faces lack of experience within administration and limited capacities and institutional memory in working with complex documents. Moreover, alignment of key government documents such as Kosovo Strategy and Development Plan (KDSP), Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), Public Investment Program (PIP) with EPAP to make the best use of the Pre-Accession Assistance IPA²¹ is of great challenge. The coordination capacity of Kosovo institutions assessed in this exercise with its key functions on approximation of legislation, translation, institution building, coordination of foreign and bilateral assistance, information and communication and gradual preparation for EU negotiations is rather technical, but so fundamentally important to set the basis for further contractual relationship.

The new European Partnership which will be launched in November 2007 will set up the priorities for Kosovo's Institutions. In terms of legislation process, the question arises whether the government should go for two parallel plans: on the one hand the European Partnership Action Plan and on the other hand the National Plan for the Approximation of Legislation or should they be merged into one. From best practice it is recommended to have a single plan, because two parallel plans would lead to confusion into a process which is already complicated.

Mobilizing existing and attracting competent human resources is of urgent matter. In the meantime, continuing to invest in training programmes to build up domestic capacities in EU affairs is recommended. Moreover, the SAp countries are now eligible for technical assistance by TAIEX²². So far we face very limited usage of this EU

²¹ Instrument for Pre Accession (IPA). Within 2007-2009 MIPD , EC assistance for Kosovo is €199,1 million.

²² **TAIEX**-Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office

funded technical assistance. Recent extension of the instrument of TWINNING²³ to all SAP countries is a right step, taking into account country specific needs. More has to be done in order to make the most use of this Community programs aiming at building administrative and technical skills to deal with the EU requirements. All in all, an arduous and onerous work is knocking the doors of responsible authorities in Kosovo once the new European Partnership will be adopted which will contain the key principles of the agreed final status agreement.

5. EC ASSISTANCE UNDER EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP

The Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization (CARDS) programme was established by the Council Regulation (EC) 2666/2000²⁴ with the aim of providing assistance to Western Balkan countries, including Kosovo. Since 1999 until 2006, financial support allocated to Kosovo totals to 1, 635, 70 million Euro.

The Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) is a new EU financial instrument established by Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006²⁵ on 17 July 2006. As of 1 January 2007 IPA replaces all existing instruments²⁶ and it simplified and streamlined EU external assistance within pre accession process. In case of Kosovo, the IPA funds will be used to a) progressively align its legislation with the *Acquis Communautaire* and b) to support social, economic and territorial development including, *inter alia*, infrastructure and investment related activities, in particular in the areas of regional, human resources and rural development.

The assistance shall be based in European Partnership Action Plan (EPAP) and shall “cover the priorities and overall strategy resulting from a regular analysis of the situation in each country...”²⁷. Multi Annual Indicative Planning Document (MIPD) 2007 - 2009 is the key strategic planning document for assistance to Kosovo under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) which totals to 199.1 million Euros for the years to come. IPA regulation requires from beneficiary countries to have ownership over the programming process.

In order to do so, several aspects have to be ensured: Legislative framework, Institutional framework and Administrative Capacity.

²³ **TWINNING** arrangements will allow experts from EU Member States to work as advisers to the institutions of Kosovo., including for monitoring the compatibility of national legislations of SAP countries with the community *acquis*

²⁴ For more info see http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/financial_assistance/cards/general/2666_00_en.pdf

²⁵ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_210/l_21020060731en00820093.pdf

²⁶ PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD, Turkey pre-accession instrument and CARDS.

²⁷ Ibid Article 6(3).

First, Kosovo has to ensure that legislative framework is put in place in order to allow for multi-annual programming. It shall also in its legal acts foresee clauses for budget flexibility as co-financing is one of IPA preconditions. Kosovo is undergoing the process of approximation of legislation; therefore, it has to ensure that relevant pieces of legislation are EU compatible.

Second, to be able to absorb IPA funds and to be in position to coordinate and programme EU aid, more and sophisticated institutional structures have to be put in place. This includes planning and establishing all structures at national and local level, as well as implementation bodies with clear role and responsibilities.

Third, the European Integration responsible body needs to be able to respond to the requirements of EC assistance, namely IPA. The programming, implementation of projects funded under EC require coherent and well build structures with competent and well trained personnel.

With regards to key strategic documents, linkage has been very difficult since the Kosovo National Development plan (KDSP) hasn't been finalized and this represents a difficulty at the outset when it comes to programming of EU assistance.

6. CHALLENGES AHEAD

The main challenges for Kosovo on the way to EU membership lie in understanding the process and its consequences; having a full dedication and commitment from the government by placing European Integration as a top agenda; strong and sustainable institutions; administrative capability to prepare and implement coherent, consistent and well coordinated strategies and plans conducive to economic development and EU integration process.

A challenge lies in understanding global and world political trends and developing capacity to understand and selectively setting top priorities, to maintain continuous clear commitment towards EU integration and NATO membership. In order to succeed, a political consensus needs to be build up as wide as possible, consensus over National Strategy for EU Integration, wide consensus over the SAA negotiations and application for EU membership and consensus on negotiations for accession. A valid challenge is to build consensus over the implementation of the international agreements and obligations, including the membership in international organizations.

Public support is of high importance and needs to be gained with clear arguments in favor of EU integration and membership. A powerful and well planed strategy to involve media, journalists, social partners, CSO's and public opinion makers is fundamental to make a success story out of this process.

Same goes for the area of communication and information. Accountability, transparency and timely information of the progress in the process by the government side are essential. A strategy and an action plan for communication of the EU integration process needs to be up and running.

A strong link must be ensured between the political and decision making bodies and administrative, operational and technical level to implement and deliver on agreed priorities. There has to be a responsible minister for EU affairs who manages and coordinates all EU integration initiatives on a daily bases. A challenge for responsible minister for EU affairs is to streamline assistance and to concentrate on the priorities within EU integration process.

For Kosovo, a real challenge will be to set one coherent, consistent and well coordinated plan for the adoption of EU policies and law, namely National Plan for Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA). Consensus over NPAA needs to be reached in the Kosovo Assembly and accepted by the government as legislative program. It must become a referent document for setting up and reorganizing institutions, setting budget priorities, programming of foreign assistance and formulation of negotiation positions.

IPA now creates a single, unified financial instrument for pre-accession assistance and this for the whole period of the financial framework 2007 till 2013. To be able to absorb IPA funds as well as coordinate and programme EU aid, Kosovo government needs to develop the required legislative and institutional framework and in accordance develop administrative capacities. Ownership of programming should be increasingly assumed and responsibility of implementation activities gradually taken over. Ministry of Finance needs to get on board at early stages, including budget planning process, whereas IPA programming is lead by National IPA Coordinator. One voice policy between National Aid Coordinator and Central Donor Coordination mechanism needs to be reached.

Strengthening the administration so it can be entrusted the management of EU funds over time with the progressive decentralization of EU aid requires an urgent attention. Decentralized implementation makes pre-accession assistance more effective. In addition, decentralized management must be seen as a learning process by itself for Kosovo. This will eventually lead to the management of large amounts of EU funds, once Kosovo becomes a Member State.

A true challenge will be to set a clear division on the functioning and coordination between the central European Integration Coordination Body, at the moment the AEI, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), once established, including the mission in Brussels, once established. An automatic distribution and flow of information needs to serve the MFA and Mission. MFA has to lead on all political and outward directed aspects of the EU integration process and the AEI to proceed with technical and coordinative inward oriented activities in the EU integration reforms.

Kosovo needs to immediately start preparing for the SAA negotiations. This involves preparation of the negotiation team and appropriate network of experts in the SAA fields, including preparation of the

negotiation positions. With regards to this, an early involvement of business community and wider public is recommended because of the tangible consequences of SAA for this part of society.

However, a genuine challenge is the implementation of agreed bidding documents with the EU such as EP or SAA. A strong monitoring mechanism needs to take place to follow the implementation of the obligations and accordingly produce communication and reporting tools. In years to come the challenge will be to establish SAA bodies which are lead by competent experts with strong leadership capacity. A challenge will involve the preparation for the negotiations for EU membership buy having clear division of responsibilities between key players. The strong leadership and work over NPAA is an exercise for the preparation of the negotiation positions.

Administrative capacities to run the EU integration process, to negotiate and implement the SAA, to transpose and translate the EU legislation, to negotiate for membership and to be an equal member of the EU have proved to be a precondition to a successful process. The lack of capacities within the Public Administration in Kosovo requires an immediate action: this involves, starting immediately and systematically to prepare the administration, to conduct a Public Administration Reform and set a comprehensive action plan. The challenge involves: designing a training strategy and operational action plan; establishing specialized training centers, scholarship schemes with special attention to communication, negotiation and language skills.

In the midterm, further challenges in the process will be to reach a consensus and decide over the submission of the Application membership into the EU. This step has to follow clear sign of the maturity of the society. A challenge will be to answer to the questionnaire send by the EC. This massive exercise is a real test for the political maturity of the government, administration capacity and entire society on the readiness to comply with EU requirements. Building field expertise and accurate statistics is crucial.