

PHARE, CARDS and IPA – Instruments of Pre-Accession Assistance

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1.PHARE

Hello, my name is dr. Mladen Karadjoski, and I am an Associate Professor at the University of "St. Kliment Ohridski" – Bitola, Faculty of Law, North Macedonia. I'm going to talk to you today about Instruments of pre-accession assistance. The main purpose of my presentation is to emphasize the significant importance of the Instruments of pre-accession assistance, established by the European Union which are intended for the candidate and potential candidates for EU membership.

I will start with the first program well known as PHARE program. The European Union member states and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe share the same ideal and vision of their common future: seizing the historic opportunity for building a larger democratic family of European nations. In order to achieve this goal, a policy of closer political, economic and cultural integration needs to be pursued by the European Union and its Eastern European partners. In the aftermath of the 1989 events, the latter expressed their desire to rebuild their economies in order to catch up with the changes that have taken place in Western Europe after the Second World War. The PHARE Program is the first European Union's initiative which provides grant finance to support its partner countries to the stage where they are ready to assume the obligations of membership of the European Union.

The term "PHARE" - Poland and Hungary Assistance for the Restructuring of the Economy - initially described as the international efforts to provide economic support to the emerging Polish and Hungarian democracies – was created as the EU's main financial instrument for accession of the Central and Eastern European countries. It was launched as a specific EC program, initiated by Council Regulation No. 3906/89. Its funding is used to channel technical, economic and infrastructural expertise and assistance to recipient states. The aim is to help these countries achieve market economies based on free enterprise and private initiative.

The PHARE budget was established by the European Union's budgetary authorities - the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. The responsible authority for the ongoing management of PHARE funds is the European Commission. Implementation of PHARE is largely decentralized to the recipient countries, and is becoming more so as countries develop the systems to manage the program. Within each country there is a National Coordinator, usually a minister, who supervises PHARE through planning, programming and implementation. The start-up and management of the program is handled by Program Management Units (PMUs), usually run by local civil servants from the relevant ministries, and other implementing agencies. The PMUs are the driving force of PHARE on the ground. They are involved in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of PHARE projects, and are also responsible for launching tenders for supplies and services.

The objective of the PHARE programme, as stated in article 3 of the PHARE Regulation, was: To support the process of reform in particular by financing or participating in the financing of projects aimed at economic restructuring. Such projects or cooperation measures should be undertaken in particular in the areas of agriculture, industry, investment, energy, training, environmental protection, trade and services; they should be aimed in particular at the private sector.

The PHARE programme developed initially as an immediate response to challenges facing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe as they sought, at different speeds, to undertake a series of sweeping, systemic transformation measures to replace the inherited system of centralised and hierarchical economic and political decision-making, with a system of democracy based on a market economy, the rule of law, respect for human and minority rights, and a functional civil society. PHARE program support was provided to the countries on a 'demand-driven' basis, so as to reflect the challenges each country faced and the priorities/needs identified by each in their individual plans for pursuing transformation. PHARE support to the beneficiaries was provided via broad-based sectoral assistance (e.g. Transport, Energy, Telecommunications, Agriculture, Environment, Private Sector Development, Privatisation and Restructuring, Employment, Social Development, Education Reform, etc.), designed to put in place the necessary structures and strategic approach for undertaking sectoral reforms. PHARE support was primarily delivered via technical assistance (e.g. to finance preliminary studies, actions plans or as outside expertise and policy advice, to provide professional training), or for the purchase of essential equipment of supplies, or as start-up capital.

The Phare programme features two overriding priorities: Institution building and investment support. From 1998, around 30% of Phare assistance has been channelled towards institution building, which includes strengthening of democratic institutions and public administration to bring the countries up to scratch, so that they will be able to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria for membership.

This will be done through training, technical assistance and twinning of institutions and administrations in the applicant countries with relevant bodies in the member states. Initially, this support will focus on areas such as finance, justice and home affairs.

The Phare Management Committee, on 24 April 1998, approved a 12 MECU programme for improving governance and management (SIGMA), until end 2000.

Institution building; Policy making, coordination and regulatory management; Budgeting, expenditure management and procurement; Public service management; Financial control, audit and administrative oversight; Programme management; Programme objectives.

The general objective of the programme is to assist the Central and Eastern European countries to build sound, efficient and effective public institutions, which will enable them to satisfy the Copenhagen accession criteria, particularly by: strengthening general management systems of public institutions; improving government capacities to design and implement institution building programmes.

To fulfil these aims, SIGMA will work to:

strengthen general management systems of public institutions as an efficient approach to upgrading capacities, especially in preparation for accession; maintain a stable pool of experts;

support networking and peer practitioner inter-change; ensure timely, flexible, specific responses within the framework of fixed long-term objectives; act in parallel or upstream to Phare national programmes and coordinate closely with the Commission's external and technical services; ensure information flows, multi-country exchanges and shared development of optional tools and knowledge.

2.CARDS

Most Community assistance for the countries of South-Eastern Europe was provided under Regulation (EC) No 1628/96 establishing the OBNOVA program and Regulation (EC) No 3906/89 establishing the PHARE program. This Regulation repeals the OBNOVA Regulation and amends the PHARE Regulation, and establishes a single framework for assistance to the countries of South-Eastern Europe: the CARDS program (Community assistance for reconstruction, development and stabilization).

The following states were eligible for Community assistance: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, entities under United Nations jurisdiction and administration, federal, regional and local bodies, public and semi-public bodies, the social partners, organizations providing support to businesses, cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations, and non-governmental organizations.

The objective of the CARDS program is to enable the countries of South-Eastern Europe to participate in the stabilization and association process. It covers in particular:

- reconstruction;
- stabilization of the region;
- aid for the return of refugees and displaced persons;
- support for democracy, the rule of law, human and minority rights, civil society, independent media and the fight against organized crime;
- the development of a sustainable market-oriented economy;
- poverty reduction, gender equality, education and training, and environmental rehabilitation;
- regional, transnational, international and interregional cooperation between the recipient countries and the Union and other countries of the region.

Community assistance is subject to respect for the principles of democracy, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, human and minority rights, and the implementation of the democratic, institutional and economic reforms envisaged.

A strategic framework is established for the 2002-2006 period, which sets the program's long-term objectives and priority fields of action. On the basis of this framework, multiannual indicative programs are drawn up for three-year periods for each country. These describe the reforms to be carried out and include an assessment of the progress made and indicative

amounts. Annual action programs are then adopted. These provide precise details of the objectives, fields of action and budget, as well as the specific projects to be financed.

Community assistance may take the form of investment and institution building programs.

Participation in invitations to tender and contracts is open to all natural and legal persons from Member States, states which are recipients under this Regulation and candidate countries. Participation by countries which are recipients under the TACIS and MEDA programs may also be authorized by the Commission.

In implementing this Regulation, the European Commission is assisted by the CARDS Committee, which examines all questions relating to the program.

The CARDS budget for the 2000-2006 period totals EUR 4.65 billion.

Every year the Commission submits to the European Parliament and the Council a progress report on the Community assistance to the countries of South-Eastern Europe. Under the Regulation, the recipient countries may participate in the activities of the European Training Foundation and the Tempus III programme.

The general objectives of CARDS are to support the participation of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro in the Stabilisation and Association Process. CARDS assistance (2000-2006) has an overall budget of m4.65 billion and is targeted at the following sectors: Justice and home affairs: reform of the judiciary and police, migration and asylum, integrated border management, the fight against organised crime; Administrative capacity building: public administration reform, taxation and customs; Economic and social development: economic reform, social cohesion, local infrastructure development, education; Democratic stabilisation: civil society development, refugee return, media reform; Environment and natural resources: institution strengthening, monitoring and planning.

CARDS assistance is managed in a number of ways: The Delegations of the European Commission in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia directly manage most national programmes and projects. In Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a special agency, the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR), with its operational headquarters in Thessaloniki, is responsible for the delivery of most EU assistance. And, in Brussels, the European Commission headquarters manages the TEMPUS programme for higher education, programmes for the modernisation of the customs and tax services (such as the Customs and Fiscal Assistance Office - CAFAO), and all regional programmes. CARDS assistance is provided by means of either contracts to provide services, supplies or works to beneficiary countries or grants (generally for projects proposed by non-profit making organisations such as NGOs or Member State bodies). Invitations to tender are open on equal terms to all natural and legal persons from the EU Member States, the beneficiary countries of the CARDS programme and the candidate countries.

CARDS is not just about better programming - it is about improved delivery too. The trend towards increasing local management of programmes has boosted the sense of local partnership, mutual trust and ownership of projects. It has also led to increased self-confidence as the countries in the region recognise what they need, rather than just

accepting what they receive. Alongside the strategic objective of assisting integration into the European Union, CARDS can also respond rapidly to changing situations on the ground.

The responsibility for the program has been transferred in 2005 from the External Relations to the Enlargement Directorate General. It has a dual management system as the part of the program covering Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia is operated by the Thessaloniki based European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) while the rest of support follows a de-concentrated system as it is managed by the Commission's delegations to Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. The program also has a regional component absorbing a 10% of total support, a rather innovative characteristic in comparison with past aid programs, that underlines EU's emphasis on regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.

3. The introduction of IPA

The Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA I, II and III) are one of the manifestations of European Union (EU) support offered as financial and technical help to undertaking necessary reforms in the countries envisaged to join the EU in the near future: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Out of these 7 “enlargement countries”, 6 belong to the Western Balkans region, and represent the main beneficiaries of EU pre-accession assistance.

These instruments are very essential and necessary for the candidate and potential candidates for EU membership, not only for financial and material reasons, but also because of the big expert, logistic and normative support which is attached to the pre-accession instruments of the European Union, as their immanent components.

The legal base for the establishment of IPA programs lies in several EU regulations, and the most important ones are:

- IPA I – Council Regulation (EC) – No. 1085/2006;
- Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II);
- Regulation Of The European Parliament And Of The Council Establishing The Instrument For Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)-2018/0247

4. The aim of IPA

Objectives of IPA I: (a) strengthening of democratic institutions, as well as the rule of law, including its enforcement; (b) the promotion and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and enhanced respect for minority rights, the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination; (c) public administration reform, including the establishment of a system enabling decentralisation of assistance management to the beneficiary country in accordance with the rules laid down in Regulation (EC, Euratom) No

1605/ 2002; (d) economic reform; (e) the development of civil society; (f) social inclusion; (g) reconciliation, confidence-building measures and reconstruction; (h) regional and cross-border cooperation. Also, for support of the following areas: (a) the adoption and implementation of the *acquis communautaire*; (b) support for the policy development as well as preparation for the implementation and management of the Community's common agricultural and cohesion policies. (c) progressive alignment with the *acquis communautaire*; (d) 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.

Objectives of IPA II: (a) support for political reforms, inter alia through: (i) strengthening of democracy and its institutions, including an independent and efficient judiciary, and of the rule of law, including its implementation; (ii) promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, enhanced respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, promotion of gender equality, non-discrimination and tolerance, as well as freedom of the media and respect for cultural diversity; (iii) regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations; (iv) promotion of reconciliation, peace-building and confidence-building measures; (v) the fight against corruption and organised crime; (vi) strengthening of public administration and good governance at all levels; (vii) capacity-building measures for improving law enforcement, border management and implementation of migration policy, including the management of migration flows; (viii) development of civil society; (ix) improvement of social dialogue and strengthening of the capacities of social partners; (b) support for economic, social and territorial development, with a view to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, inter alia through: (i) the achievement of Union standards in the economy, including a functioning market economy, as well as fiscal and economic governance; (ii) economic reforms necessary to cope with competitive pressure and market forces in the Union, while contributing to the achievement of social and environmental goals; (iii) fostering of employment and labour mobility, promotion of quality job creation and development of human capital; (iv) promotion of social and economic inclusion, in particular of minorities and vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, refugees and displaced persons; (v) fostering of an inclusive and integrated education system and preservation and restoration of cultural heritage; (vi) development of physical capital, including improvement of infrastructure, and connections with Union and regional networks; (vii) strengthening of research, technological development and innovation capacity; (c) strengthening of the ability of the beneficiaries at all levels to fulfil the obligations stemming from Union membership by supporting progressive alignment with, and adoption, implementation and enforcement of, the Union *acquis*, including preparation for management of Union Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; (d) strengthening regional integration and territorial cooperation involving the beneficiaries listed in Annex I, Member States and, where appropriate, third countries within the scope of Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

Generally, these policy areas were concerned: (a) reforms in preparation for Union membership and related institution- and capacity-building; (b) socio-economic and regional development; (c) employment, social policies, education, promotion of gender equality, and human resources development; (d) agriculture and rural development; (e) regional and territorial cooperation.

Objectives of IPA III: The general objective of IPA III shall be to support the beneficiaries listed in adopting and implementing the political, institutional, legal, administrative, social and economic reforms required by those beneficiaries to comply with Union values and to progressively align to Union rules, standards, policies and practices with a view to Union membership, thereby contributing to their stability, security and prosperity. 2. IPA III shall have following specific objectives: (a) To strengthen the rule of law, democracy, the respect of human rights, fundamental rights and international law, civil society and security as well as improve migration management including border management; (b) To reinforce the effectiveness of public administration and support structural reforms and good governance at all levels; (c) To shape the rules, standards, policies and practices of the beneficiaries listed in Annex I in alignment to those of the Union and to reinforce reconciliation and good neighbourly relations, as well as people to people contacts and communication; (d) To strengthen economic and social development including through increased connectivity and regional development, agriculture and rural development and social and employment policies, to reinforce environmental protection, increase resilience to climate change, accelerate the shift towards a low-carbon economy and develop the digital economy and society. (e) To support territorial and cross-border cooperation.

5. Implementation and management of IPA

Implementation will need to be accelerated, in particular in the early years, to prevent structural backlogs in contracting and implementation, and to progressively absorb current delays. The mid-term evaluation has shown that while the impact in terms of increased ownership is considered positive, contracting performance has been poor and there have been long delays in implementation, especially in Turkey. Monitoring was done on the basis of the indicators set out in the proposal. The relevant performance indicators were defined and included in the IPA programming framework and proportionate reporting requirements imposed on recipients of EU funds. The enlargement reports were taken as a point of reference in assessing the results of IPA III assistance. The performance reporting system should ensure that data for monitoring implementation and results are collected efficiently, effectively and on time. The evaluations will assess the Instrument's effects on the ground based on the relevant indicators and targets and a detailed analysis of the degree to which the Instrument can be deemed relevant, effective, efficient, provides enough EU added value and is coherent with other EU policies. The evaluations will include lessons learnt to identify any lacks/problems or any potential to further improve the actions or their results and to help

maximise their exploitation/impact. The conclusions of the evaluations accompanied by observations will be communicated to the European Parliament and to the Council.

Structure of IPA II assistance: (a) the National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC); (b) the National Authorising Officer (NAO); (c) the Operating Structures. 2. The NAO shall establish a management structure composed of a National Fund and a support office for the NAO. 3. The IPA II beneficiary shall provide for an audit authority. 4. The IPA II beneficiary shall ensure adequate segregation of duties between and within the structures and authorities.

The Strategy Papers are the overarching strategic planning documents that set the priorities and objectives for the 7-year period. They replace the Multi-annual Indicative and Planning Documents (MIPDs) used until 2013.

The indicative Country Strategy Papers provide the frame for financial assistance for each individual IPA II beneficiary. They identify key sectors where substantial improvements and reforms are necessary for beneficiaries to advance on the path to EU membership. For each of these, the Strategy Paper also defines the results expected to be achieved by 2020 through the assistance, the actions that are necessary to reach them, as well as identifies indicators that will allow monitoring of progress towards achievement of those results.

Similarly, an indicative Multi-Country Strategy Paper highlights priorities and conditions for horizontal support to sector policies and reforms (including assistance to civil society), regional structures and networks, regional investment support, as well as territorial cooperation including cross-border cooperation programs.

- Under direct management; i.e. the implementation of the budget is carried out directly by the Commission until the relevant national authorities are accredited to manage the funds.
- Under indirect management; i.e. budget implementation tasks are delegated to and carried out by entities entrusted by the Commission; they can be:
 - the IPA II beneficiary or an entity designated by it (one of the main objectives of IPA II is to encourage beneficiaries to take ownership and responsibility for implementation; indirect management by the IPAlI beneficiary is therefore expected to become the norm);
 - an agency of a Member State or, exceptionally, of a third donor country;
 - an international organization; or
 - an EU specialized (but not executive) agency.

In other words, the Commission delegates the management of certain actions to external entities, while still retaining overall final responsibility for the general budget execution.

- Shared management; i.e. implementation tasks are delegated to EU member states (only for cross-border cooperation programs with EU countries).

In the context of direct management, Sector Budget Support is yet another tool for delivering pre-accession assistance and achieving sustainable results under IPA II. It consists of financial transfers to the national treasury account of an IPA II beneficiary and requires performance assessment and capacity development, based on partnership and mutual accountability. It is delivered through Sector Reform Contracts.

6. IPA I – a step ahead or differentiation appeared

In order to improve the efficiency of the Community's External Aid, a new framework for programming and delivery of assistance has been envisaged. The present instrument constitutes one of the general instruments directly supporting European External Aid policies. At its meeting in Thessaloniki, on 19 and 20 June 2003, the European Council recalled the conclusions of its meetings in Copenhagen in December 2002 and Brussels in March 2003 and reiterated its determination to fully and effectively support the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries, indicating that they would become an integral part of the European Union, once they met the established criteria.

The Thessaloniki European Council 2003 also indicated that the Stabilisation and Association Process would constitute the overall framework for the European course of the Western Balkan countries all the way to their future accession.

In its resolution on the Thessaloniki European Council Conclusions, the European Parliament recognised that each of the Western Balkan countries was moving towards accession, but at the same time insisted that each country should be judged on its own merits.

The financial reference amount for the period from 2007 to 2013 was EUR 11 468 million. The annual appropriations were authorised by the budgetary authority within the limits of the financial framework

Assistance may also be used to cover the costs of actions linked to preparation, follow-up, control, audit and evaluation directly necessary for the administration of the programme and the attainment of its objectives, in particular studies, meetings, information and publicity, expenses linked to informatics networks aiming at information exchange, as well as any other expenses for administrative and technical assistance of which the Commission can avail itself for the administration of the programme. It also covers the cost of the administrative support for the purposes of devolved programme management in the Commission delegations in third countries.

7. IPA II – a different approach taken

For the period 2007-2013, IPA had a budget of around 11.5 billion EUR, while for IPA II, built on the results already achieved, 11.7 billion EUR was allocated for the 2014-2020 period. Here is the overview of IPA II allocations for WB countries:

The expiration of the 2006 regulation at the end of 2013 and the resulting need to establish a new legal basis presented an opportunity for the Commission to undertake an evaluation of previous assistance and to introduce changes. After a number of stakeholder consultations and following an ex ante evaluation, the Commission adopted a proposal for the IPA II Regulation in December 2011,⁸ as part of a package of external action instruments. While maintaining its general scope, existing implementation arrangements were adjusted in order to ensure that “preaccession assistance will be more closely linked to the enlargement priorities, and be based on a more results-oriented and strategic approach targeting key reforms in the enlargement countries”.⁹ This would be achieved through a number of

measures that could be summed up in three main categories: 1) replacing the existing five IPA components through policy areas and allowing undifferentiated access for all countries; 2) new approaches to conferral of management to beneficiaries; 3) generalisation of a sector approach with the increased use of (sectoral) budget support. Whereas the IPA II regulation also contains a number of other features (like a renewed strategic framework and increased flexibility), these features are directly linked to the more fundamental changes operated in the regulation.

8. What's next? IPA III and new perspectives for the WB 6

In November 2015, the European Commission set out a medium-term strategy for the Union's enlargement policy, which remains valid today. The current enlargement agenda covers the partners of the Western Balkans and Turkey. Accession negotiations have been opened with candidate countries Turkey (2005), Montenegro (2012), and Serbia (2014). North Macedonia has been a candidate since 2005 and Albania obtained candidate status in 2014. Bosnia and Herzegovina (which submitted its application to join the EU in February 2016) and Kosovo (with which a Stabilisation and Association Agreement entered into force in April 2016) are potential candidates. On 17 April 2018, the European Commission recommended to the Council the opening of accession negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania in light of the progress achieved. This would maintain and deepen the current reform momentum. The European Commission reaffirmed the firm, merit-based prospect of Union membership for the Western Balkans in. This is a strong message of encouragement for the whole Western Balkans and a sign of the Union's commitment to their European future. The Commission has maintained an open and constructive dialogue with Turkey and is using every opportunity to emphasise that Turkey's stated commitment to its EU accession needs to be matched with corresponding measures and reforms. It is also keen to continue engaging with Turkey in a number of key areas of shared interests. These include trade and economic relations, energy, transport, migration and asylum, foreign policy, security and counterterrorism. Three key elements have guided this proposal for a Regulation: • For 2021-2027, IPA III should be clearly framed by the new Western Balkans strategy, and should reflect developments in relations with Turkey. IPA III reflects the objectives of that new strategy in order to: • maximise the impact of the flagship initiatives set forth in the strategy; • help the transformation process in the Western Balkans in the next period; • implement robust economic reform programmes ; and • renew the focus on reforms necessary for future membership. • The Western Balkans strategy indicates a potential accession date for at least some candidates under the strict condition that all conditions should be met. Financial means must be available to support the preparations and investments required in the years before accession. This includes ensuring a gradual and seamless transition from pre-accession status to that of member state. It also requires partners to develop the necessary capacity to absorb EU funds, in particular to implement agricultural and cohesion policy. • The implementation of IPA II is still under way and continuity should

be preserved. In terms of political priorities, IPA III will be shaped around the key ones laid down in the relevant enlargement policy and strategy documents. These are: the rule of law, fundamental rights and governance; socio-economic development; Union policies and acquis; people-to people contacts and reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation. While these were already spelt out under IPA II, other key challenges such as migration, security, protection of the environment and climate change are taken on board more visibly in the proposal.

The financial envelope for the implementation of IPA III for the period 2021-2027 shall be EUR 14 500 000 000 in current prices.

Only minimal changes would be necessary to clearly position it in the context of the new Western Balkans Strategy, and reflect the developments in the relations with Turkey. At the same time, more efforts should be put in place to ensure coherence and synergies with the broad instrument, in particular with respect to the thematic and non-programmable component. The complementarity of the instrument with other external financing instruments, notably EIDHR and IcSP has previously been good but coordination during both the planning and programming phase has not been sufficient. Close alignment between the programming cycles of IPA and the programmable parts of the broad instrument would facilitate complementarity. In terms of political priorities, IPA III will be shaped around the following key political priorities: Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and governance; SocioEconomic development; EU policies and acquis; and Reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation. While these were already spelt out under IPA II, new challenges such as migration, security and climate change will also have to be taken into account. In order to respond to the new priorities and integrate lessons learnt, IPA III will need to be further aligned with recent developments in enlargement policy. This requires in particular close links to the objectives of the new Strategy for the Western Balkans, to maximise the impact of the Flagship Initiatives set forth in the Strategy to help the transformation process in the Western Balkans in the next period, to implement robust Economic Reform Programmes (ERPs), or to renew the focus on reforms necessary for future membership. Greater flexibility in funding allocations will have to be ensured in order to cater for unexpected/emerging priorities and to take into account the level of progress of respective countries in EU related reforms. Implementation will need to be accelerated, in particular in the first years, to avoid structural contracting and implementation backlogs, and to progressively absorb current delays. In a context of constrained budgetary resources, IPA III will have to work to further mobilise the leveraging potential of IFIs and other partners, including the private sector, in particular for supporting competitiveness and inclusive growth, or financing large scale infrastructure investments. The overall performance framework will have to be strengthened and simplified.

9. Conclusion

So that's the frame and the main content of the EU Instruments of pre-accession assistance. In conclusion, it is very clear that these instruments are very important for the accession of the candidate and potential candidate countries towards the European Union. All the positive experiences coming from the realization and accomplishment of PHARE and CARDS program actually had confirmed the necessity of IPA programs, i.e. IPA I, followed by IPA II and now continued with IPA III. Of course, all these programs are not a final target of the countries waiting for EU membership. Their final goal is the usage of Structural funds and Cohesion fund, which will be enabled after fulfilment of all required standards and criteria and passing the accession procedure. Anyway, IPA programs are very useful tool for a concrete help and guidance done by the European Union for all candidate and potential candidate countries... Thank you very much.