



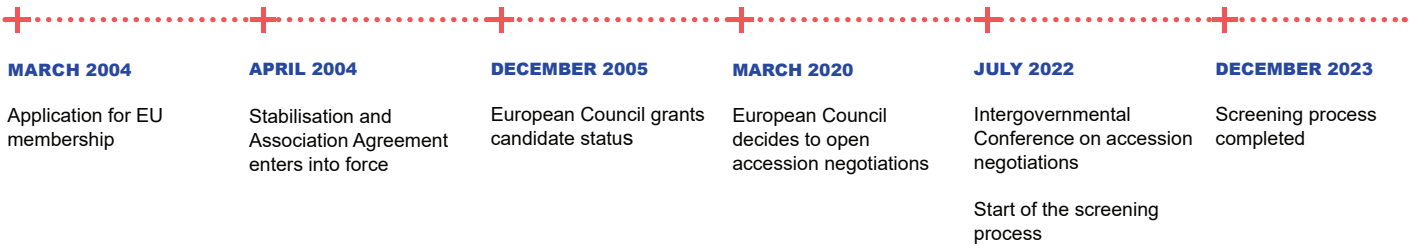
THE EU AND NORTH MACEDONIA

#WesternBalkans
#EUEnlargement

October 2024



North Macedonia is an **EU candidate country** since 2005.



Growth Plan for the Western Balkans

In 2023, the EU announced a landmark **Growth Plan** to accelerate Western Balkans partners' socio-economic development and EU integration.

The Plan **aims to boost socio-economic convergence** through **enhanced economic integration with the EU's single market**, regional integration **within the Common Regional Market**, accelerating fundamental reforms.

As part of this Growth Plan, North Macedonia was invited to prepare a **Reform Agenda** focusing on reforms to **unlock national and regional growth potential** and reforms related to the fundamentals of the enlargement process, **including the rule of law, democracy, the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms**.

A €6 billion **Reform and Growth Facility** for the Western Balkans will provide key support to the implementation of the Growth Plan. The Commission approved the Reform Agenda of North Macedonia in October 2024. **€750.4 million in non-repayable grants and favourable loans** will be available to North Macedonia **when** it meets the conditions it has committed to in its own Reform Agenda.



The EU is North Macedonia's

✓ largest trade partner

✓ largest investor

✓ largest provider of financial assistance



Ongoing EU support to North Macedonia

The **EU** is the **largest provider of financial assistance** to North Macedonia. It offers a variety of programmes and instruments to support North Macedonia's development and EU accession process.

Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA)

In **2021-2024**, the EU has allocated **over €300 million** of financial and technical assistance to North Macedonia under IPA III. Assistance is provided in the form of **non-repayable grants**. This includes:

- **€80 million Energy Support Package**, which supported vulnerable families and SMEs in North Macedonia in dealing with rising energy prices.
- **€18 million** to boost the **effectiveness and efficiency of public administration** in North Macedonia.
- **Over €20 million to accelerate business environment reform and transformation** on North Macedonia's path to join the Single Market, building upon the synergies between innovation, agriculture, energy transition and private sector developments.

Economic & Investment Plan (EIP)

The EU's **EIP for the Western Balkans** identifies 10 flagship investments in sustainable transport, clean energy, environment and climate, digital future, human capital and the private sector, to support a **green and digital transition** and bring the region **closer to the EU's single market**.

For projects in **North Macedonia**, since 2020 the EU has already mobilised **€1.7 billion in investments thanks to €594 million in EU grants**. Funds are raised through tools such as the Western Balkans Investment Facility Framework (WBIF). This includes:

- Rehabilitation of a **34 km railway line** between Beljakovce and Kriva Palanka on Rail Corridor VIII, which should provide direct access to modern means of transport to **more than 350 000 people**.
- Increasing capacity of Bogdanci wind park by up to 15 MW, which should allow the facility to **supply 22 000 households with clean energy** and avoid 153 600 tonnes of CO₂ emissions each year.
- Constructing a **wastewater treatment plant** for Skopje, expected to serve 528 900 people and mitigate pollution of the Vardar river.



What we are achieving together



957 MW renewable energy generation capacity installed



107 km of future-proof gas pipelines built



205 km of railway lines rehabilitated



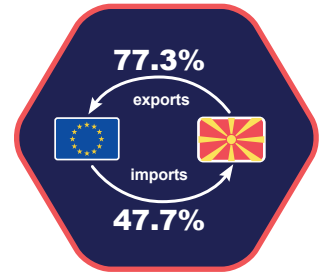
Efficient solid waste services for **1.4 million people**



Close trade & investment links

The **EU is North Macedonia's main trading partner**. In 2023, the EU accounted for 60.4% of North Macedonia's total trade in goods (77.3% of total exports and 47.7% of total imports). Total EU Foreign Direct Investment reached €519.6 million in 2022*.

Progressive trade liberalisation and mutual duty-free access for most goods has been taking place since 2004 and is currently based on the EU – North Macedonia **Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)**.



© Zoltan Vasadi, Mustafa Comor and Jasmin Zeherovic



Foreign & security policy cooperation

North Macedonia has continued to fully align on EU's **Common Security and Defense Policy** positions and declarations. In addition:

- North Macedonia continued to **actively participate in EU crisis management missions and operations** under the Common Security and Defense Policy.
- North Macedonia benefited from the second bilateral assistance measure under the **European Peace Facility** in 2024.
- The Balkans Medical Task Force, in which North Macedonia participates, benefits from a €6 million 2022 support under the **European Peace Facility**.
- The EU provides support in facing hybrid threats, including cyber and foreign information manipulation and interference.



People to people contacts

- Since 2010, citizens from North Macedonia benefit from **visa-free travel** to the EU.
- The EU has funded over **34 500 exchanges** between EU and Macedonian citizens in the areas of education, training, youth, and sport under **ERASMUS+** (2014-2020).
- The city of **Skopje** was awarded the title of the **European Capital of Culture 2028**.

* Source: DG Trade

ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement
facebook.com/EUnear | x.com/eu_near

© European Union, 2024

Reuse of this document is allowed, provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license). For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders. All images © European Union, © Adobe Stock and © Shutterstock, unless otherwise stated.