The EU acknowledged the European perspective for all Western Balkan partners at the Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003. The Republic of North Macedonia (hereinafter ‘North Macedonia’) applied for EU membership in March 2004. In December 2005, it was granted candidate status by the European Council. The first Political Intergovernmental Conference on accession negotiations was held in July 2022. The Commission immediately after launched the analytical examination of North Macedonia’s alignment to EU acquis (screening), which is progressing smoothly.

**EU FUNDING**

The EU is the largest provider of financial assistance to North Macedonia. The EU is supporting the socioeconomic development and fundamental reforms in North Macedonia with financial and technical assistance through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).

For 2021-2023, the IPA III funding for national programmes amounts to **€265 million** for North Macedonia. This includes the dedicated **€80 million** from the 2023 Energy Support Package immediate measures, 90% of which have already been disbursed to support vulnerable families and SMEs facing the rising energy prices. The actions are also aimed at supporting policy measures to accelerate the energy transition.

Since 1999, the EU has provided **€1.2 billion** in loans to North Macedonia through the European Investment Bank.

**TRADE AND INVESTMENT**

Total EU Foreign Direct Investment in North Macedonia amounted to €4.5 billion in 2022.

Total volume of trade in goods with the EU was €13.8 billion in 2022.

**KEY MILESTONES**

- **MARCH 2004** Application for EU membership
- **APRIL 2004** Stabilisation and Association Agreement enters into force
- **DECEMBER 2005** European Council grants candidate status
- **OCTOBER 2009** Commission recommends opening of accession negotiations
- **JUNE 2018** The Council sets out the path towards opening accession negotiations
- **MARCH 2020** Intergovernmental Conference on accession negotiations
- **JULY 2022** Start of the screening process
HUMAN CAPITAL

The EU pays special attention to youth, education, and innovation. It helps the Western Balkans in implementing Youth Guarantee schemes to support youth employment.

34,500+ participants took part in exchanges between the EU and North Macedonia in the areas of education, training, youth, and sport under ERASMUS+ (2014-2020).

The EU has provided around €42 million in support to civil society (2014-2023).

The city of Skopje was awarded the title of the European Capital of Culture 2028.

ECONOMIC AND INVESTMENT PLAN

Launched in 2020, the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans aims to mobilise up to €30 billion in cooperation with international financial institutions until 2027. Under the EIP for North Macedonia, the EU has already mobilised €1.6 billion in investments, out of which €566 million in grants.

The EIP flagship projects in public sector for North Macedonia, endorsed between 2020 and 2023, support sustainable transport, clean energy, and environment and climate.

For instance, the investments help:

- construct Kriva Palanka – Stracin express road of Corridor VIII: North Macedonia-Bulgaria rail interconnection
- increase the capacity of Bogdanci wind park
- build a central wastewater treatment plant for Skopje

Expected results up to 2030

- 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