

*Over many years, the European Union has developed strategically targeted policies to improve economic opportunities in its disadvantaged regions. It has also successfully applied such policies in the pre-accession phase leading up to the EU's recent expansion and it continues to apply them in Romania and Bulgaria. Recent decisions have also ensured that Croatia now benefits from pre-accession schemes.*

*Sustainable development in transition economies requires strategic development plans, since indiscriminate financing of individual projects, sectors or geographical areas simply leads to a waste of resources if there is no proper planning system. To this end, BiH recently completed the Medium-term Poverty Reduction Strategy and Development Plan.*

*In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EC is providing support for regional development, which will ultimately lead to structural funding when BiH joins the Union. This Regional Economic Development Strategy has been co-ordinated by the ARDA - new Regional Development Agency for Northwest BiH, during an extensive process of consultation within the region over the past 9 months, under the guidance of the EU RED project. Municipalities and other local government structures, along with a variety of organisations and groups representing the private and civil sectors, have participated enthusiastically in the discussions about their economic future – the detailed measures outlined in this Strategy are the result of their contributions and reflect their commitment.*

*Much remains to be done to get the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina back on its feet, and this*

*Regional Strategy will assist in this endeavour. It will serve as a reference document for investors, for government and for the European Union. We hope that the government and other donors will use it to plan their interventions, so that strategic projects will have the greatest possible impact. We wish the North-west BiH Region and its stakeholders all the best for its successful implementation.*

*Ambassador Michael B. Humphreys*

*Head of Delegation of  
the European Commission to BiH*