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PRESS RELEASE

ECB LAUNCHES EU-FUNDED COOPERATION PROGRAMME WITH THE CENTRAL BANK OF MONTENEGRO

- The programme is aimed at assisting the Central Bank of Montenegro in meeting the EU's central banking standards.
- It is part of an ECB's strategy directed towards Western Balkan candidate and potential candidate countries for EU accession.

The European Central Bank (ECB) has today launched a Eurosystem cooperation programme with the Central Bank of Montenegro. The European Union (EU) has allocated almost €300,000 from its Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to fund the programme.

The programme is aimed at assisting the Central Bank of Montenegro in their preparations for joining the European System of Central Banks (ESCB), once the country has qualified for EU membership. Within the framework of the programme, a needs-assessment report will be prepared, identifying further progress required to meet the EU's central banking standards.

To lay the foundations for this programme, Mario Draghi, President of the ECB, and Milojica Dakić, Governor of the Central Bank of Montenegro, signed a memorandum of understanding between their institutions and those Eurosystem national central banks that participate in the programme.

Announcing the launch of the programme during a press conference in Podgorica today, Mr Dakić said: "The project commences at a very important moment for the Central Bank of Montenegro and the country itself as the remaining negotiation chapters are being opened. The project is significant with a view to improving the economic and financial cooperation of the Central Bank of Montenegro with the central banks of the EU Member States. This provides a support to the Central Bank of Montenegro in identifying necessary policies through an analysis that will be the basis for creating strategic plans and models for the alignment of the Central Bank of Montenegro's operations with the ESCB standards."

Commenting on the start of the work, Frank Moss, the ECB's Director General for International and European Relations, stated: "The programme with the Central Bank of Montenegro is part of a wider strategy of the ECB and the Eurosystem directed towards Western Balkan candidate and potential candidate countries for EU accession. It signals the willingness of the central banking community in the EU to contribute to Montenegro's EU integration process by helping the central bank to align its procedures with ESCB central banking standards."

Alberto Cammarata, representing the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro, added: "Building an economic system based on sound financial management is important in protecting consumers and attracting investors. This project reflects the EU commitment to assist all Montenegrin institutions – in this case the Central Bank – in achieving the necessary standards in this key area prior to accession."

Following the first meeting of the programme's Steering Committee in Podgorica, work on the needs-assessment report started today. Over the next seven months, experts from the Eurosystem will assess nine of the Central Bank of Montenegro's functions against EU and international standards and policies.

The programme is being implemented by the ECB in partnership with ten national central banks of the Eurosystem (Deutsche Bundesbank, Eesti Pank, Banque de France, Bank of Greece, Banca d'Italia, De Nederlandsche Bank, Oesterreichische Nationalbank, Banco de Portugal, Banka Slovenije and Národná banka Slovenska).

The programme is without prejudice to positions taken by the ECB and the EU Council with respect to the implications of the EU's legal framework for Montenegro's monetary regime, which will have to be assessed during the EU accession negotiations.

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