

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Skopje,**

**November 2016**

**Third project quarter successfully completed!**

**The Third quarter of implementation of the EU funded twinning project “Strengthening the Rule of the Law” covered the period July to September 2016 and has been brought to a fruitful end. Key achievements are the successful organisation of the 1st training sessions for judges, court advisors, public prosecutors and lawyers. Member-state short-term experts were engaged to assist the Macedonian colleagues in seven different project activities. The second study visit to EU MS was organised in Latvia where 3 beneficiary visitors had exchanged useful experiences and good practices with their hosts.**

**The Beneficiaries under the Project are the Macedonian Ministry of Justice, the Bureau for representation before European Court of Human Rights and the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.**

The overall objective of the Project is to support the justice sector institutions in consolidating the rule of law by strengthening their capacities and by assisting in alignment of the national law with the European Union *acquis* and key human rights instruments of the Council of Europe. The implementation period of the Project is 21 months (from December 2015 to September 2017). The total budget of the Project is **EUR 1 000 000**. The Project is entirely financed by the European Union.

The third Project Steering Committee meeting took place on July 7, 2016, covering the issues concerning the Project implementation progress. During the meeting the work plan for the activities for the coming months of the Project was updated. In addition to the above, during the quarter experts from Latvia and Croatia have ensured the implementation of the activities within Component No 1, 2 and 3:

* 1.1.7. Assistance in development of the competences and the role of the Judicial Council and the independence, appointment, disciplinary responsibility of judges
* 1.3.1. Screening of the existing implementation procedure of the current criminal procedure law regarding procedural rights of victims, suspects and accused persons, as well as needs and gap analyses provided
* 1.3.5. Developments of tailored made recommendations and guidelines for the successful functioning of the free legal aid services ensuring that the legal aid system is effective, accountable and transparent as well as assistance in drawing up amendments in the Law for free legal aid
* 2.2.1. Manual on searching, analyses and application of the EU law and the case law of the CJEU as well as sharing that information with the relevant actors of the BC
* 3.1.4. Study visit to Riga, Latvia for representatives of Bureau for representation of the Republic of Macedonia before European Court for Human Rights
* 3.3.1. Training sessions for judges, court advisors, prosecutors and lawyers on structural and practical operation of the ECtHR and practical use of HUDOC in order to improve knowledge and capacities on the ECHR law
* 3.3.3. Practice guide for judges, court staff, prosecutors and lawyers as regards current jurisprudence of the ECtHR as regards Article 5 of the ECHR

The decision for the establishing of the working group for the new Law on State Ensured Legal Aid was signed by the Minister of Justice. In the next quarters of the Project, the working group will proceed with review of the drafted law by the Latvian short term expert Mr Agris Batalauskis and the representative from the Macedonian Ministry of Justice – Mrs Ana Slatinec-Nestoroska.

In the cooperation with the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors and in order to improve knowledge and capacities on the ECHR law, training session on structural and practical operation of the ECtHR and practical use of HUDOC was provided for judges, court advisors, prosecutors and lawyers. It was attended by 45 participants and very highly welcomed by the participants.

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