

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Skopje,**

**February 2017**

**EU funded twinning project “Strengthening the Rule of the Law”**

**Implemented activities in the fourth quarter**

**This project is entirely financed by the European Union. The total budget of the project is EUR 1 000 000. 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 Beneficiaries under the project are the Ministry of Justice, the Bureau for representation before European Court of Human Rights and the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors of the Beneficiary Country.**

**In the fourth quarter, covering the period from October to December 2016 the following activities were successfully implemented:**

**Under Component 1:**

• **In the previous quarter, the Latvian expert in close cooperation with the beneficiary Ministry of Justice and other involved institutions, made screening of the existing legal aid system. During this quarter, the Latvian expert participated at every meeting of the working group established in the previous quarter and the result is a first draft of a new Law on Free Legal Aid. The draft law is currently under review;**

• **Recommendations for improvements in the drafted Justice Sector Reform Strategy were made;**

• **Recommendations for improvements in the drafted Chapter 6 of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy, were made by the Croatian and Latvian experts;**

• **Recommendations for improvements in the current laws and the amendments of the Law on Courts and the Law of the Judicial Council were provided;**

• **Assistance on the implementation of the system on systematic monitoring, on the effective transposition of the EU legislation was arranged;**

• **Detailed overview of the structure and competences of the EU and international networks and organisations and as well possibility for the competent beneficiary country bodies to be included in these networks/ organisations, was made.**

**Under Component 2:**

* **Manual on searching, analyses and application of the EU law and the case law of the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) was drafted;**
* **Guidelines on the institutional competence of the BC in participation in the CJEU, as well as support in preparing the necessary legal and institutional framework for setting of national system for representation before the CJEU were provided.**

**Under Component 3:**

* **Following the preparation of the Practice guide for judges, court staff, prosecutors and lawyers with regard to current jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) concerning the Right to liberty and security concerning Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the project made** **successful organisation of training sessions on the Practice Guide for judges, court staff, prosecutors and lawyers;**
* **The project experts also prepared the Practice guide for judges, court staff, prosecutors and lawyers with regard to the current jurisprudence of the ECtHR concerning Freedom of expression concerning Article 10 of the ECHR. Specific training on the Practise Guide was given to judges, court staff, prosecutors and lawyers;**
* **In order to improve the preparation of the case files submitted to the European Court of Human Rights and the admissibility of the applications, the project successfully organised training sessions for lawyers on application of the ECtHR jurisprudence and specific training sessions for lawyers were also provided in regard to the applications and the current jurisprudence of the ECtHR related to the Right to property - Article 1 of Protocol 1 of the ECHR;**
* **The project experts prepared practical information for the public, regarding their rights under the ECHR and applications before the Court. For the next quarters, the practical information is planned to be published on the new, currently under construction, web site of the Bureau for Representation before the ECtHR. In this line the project also assisted the Bureau with support on the initial template of the web page for the Bureau.**

**The effective implementation of the above activities would not have been possible without the excellent cooperation by the project beneficiaries the Bureau for Representation before the ECtHR and the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors. The interest for the training sessions was high and feedback in the training evaluation forms was positive.**

**The 3rd project Steering Committee Meeting took place on 21 October 2016, where the stakeholders reviewed the progress in the implementation of the project activities. Furthermore, on the meeting the plan of the activities for the next period was presented and approved.**

For information relating to this Press Release please contact Ms Vineta Krutko, MS RTA. Tel: +389 (0)72 266 114. E-mail: Vineta.Krutko@tm.gov.lv or Ms Maruta Jēkabsone, Senior Desk Officer of the Project Implementation Division of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Latvia. Tel: +371 67036862. E-mail: Maruta.Jekabsone@tm.gov.lv