

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Skopje,**

**October 2017**

**EU funded twinning project**

**“Strengthening the Rule of the Law” MK 11 IB JH 03 15**

**Activities implemented in the seventh quarter**

**First of all, it should be noted that in order to ensure all foreseen project results have been achieved, the project was extended till 31 October 2017. The election period of last year affected the project implementation in a way that some of the activities had to be postponed till further notice which is why the project management unanimously agreed to request an extension thus ensuring the achievement of all outcomes as foreseen in the project contract.**

**The following activities were successfully implemented** **in the seventh quarter covering the period from July to September 2017:**

**Under Component 1:**

• **The draft-Law on Free Legal Aid was reviewed by the MS experts and the Working Group. Amendments were made to meet BC requirements. Furthermore, work resumed on drafting a new Advocate Tariff as well as the necessary application forms (templates);**

• **MS experts had meetings with the newly appointed PR officer and discussed issues regarding the promotion of both internal and external communication of the Ministry;**

* **MS experts met with BC experts to discuss the draft-Judiciary Reform Strategy and the implementing Action Plan, and gave recommendations for improvement.**
* **Two two-day training sessions were held on the topic of Strategic Planning and Project Cycle Management with participants from various stakeholder institutions, such as the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Finance, the Judicial Council, the Notary Chamber, the Bar Association, etc.**

**Under Component 2:**

* **Three representatives of the Ministry of Justice went on a three-day internship to the Ministry of Justice of Latvia.**

**The 6th Steering Committee Meeting was held on 14 July 2017 where the stakeholders reviewed the project implementation progress. Furthermore, an overview of activities scheduled for the following quarter was presented. All present agreed that an extension should be requested till October, 31.**

**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 was originally 21 months (from December 2015 to September 2017), now extended to 22 months.**

**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.**

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