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On November 13, 2015 the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Latvia, the Central Financing and Contracting Department of the Ministry of Finance and the Delegation of European Union to the Beneficiary Country signed an agreement on implementation of the Twinning Project *Strengthening the Rule of Law*, MK 11 IB JH 03 (hereinafter – the Project). The Project will be implemented by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Latvian and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, the Bureau for representation of the Beneficiary Country before European Court of Human Rights and the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors.

The Beneficiary under the Project is the Ministry of Justice, the Bureau for representation of the Beneficiary Country before European Court of Human Rights and the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors. The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Latvia will participate in the Project as the Leading Project Partner. The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Latvia will act in such capacity for the first time in its history. The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia on the other hand will be the Junior Project Partner and will participate in the implementation of individual activities under the Project.

The implementation period of the Project is 21 months (from December 2015 to September 2017). The total financing of the Project amounts to EUR 1 000 000,00. The Project is financed by the European Commission.

The overall objective of the project is to support the justice sector institutions in consolidation of the rule of law by strengthening their capacities and by assisting in alignment of national law with EU *acquis* and key human rights instruments of the Council of Europe.

The Project will focus on three important components:

1. Enhancing the capacities of the Ministry of Justice to professionally execute its functions in the pre-and-post EU accession process and development of comprehensive IT solutions for access to legislation.
2. Improving the knowledge and capacities of relevant justice sector actors on the EU *acquis* and other international justice standards in view of fostering their transposition into the national law.
3. Screening of current legislative and structural system for execution of the European Court of Human Rights judgments and needs assessment in this regard.

Presently a number of preparations are done to enable the experts involved in the Project to commence the work on implementation of the activities' plan for the first six months. In addition the opening event of the Project has been scheduled for approximately April/May 2016 in the capital city of the Beneficiary Country - Skopje.

The basic idea behind the Twinning projects is to build up the capacity of public administration through the involvement of experts from EU Member States and creating opportunities for partnerships and cooperation between different countries, and the main purpose of such projects is to ensure implementation of an effective *acquis* by furthering the adjustment of legislation and strengthening the capacity of public authorities.

Additional information on the Twinning programme is available here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/tenders/twinning/index_en.htm>

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