



The Ministries of Foreign and Internal Affairs have signed today an Agreement on Cooperation in professional training of consular officers and consuls on regular migration aimed at improving the visa-issuing procedure.

The Agreement, being a significant step forward in building solid structures for monitoring and managing regular migration flows, was signed by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Mr. Aleksandar Nikolic and Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Veljko Odalovic.

The Agreement is one of the major achievements of the EU IPA funded twinning project "Promotion and implementation of mechanisms for comprehensive and consistent observation of regular migration in the Republic of Serbia", in the amount of EUR 1 million, implemented by the consortium of the Netherlands, Austria and Slovenia. The purpose of the project is to strengthen the existing capacities of the ministries in managing regular migration through the implementation of clear-cut policies, coordination of procedures and alignment of the legislation with the EU acquis.

The project focuses on the link between border control, visa issuing, leave to stay and readmission of foreign citizens residing without authorization in Serbia as well as on the efficient coordination between central-level institutions responsible for policymaking and those on operational, i.e. executive levels.

The project provides for drafting of the new Law on Foreigners and is to put into effect the first stage of the harmonization of legislation with regard to the alignment of relevant regulations with the EU directives.

Nikolic said that the project constituted one of the ways for building MIA capacities while participation in the project pointed to the fact that Serbia was a reliable partner in the European integration process, particularly in terms of the Chapter 24 Action Plan which provides for further cooperation of this kind, especially in the migration area.

MFA Secretary General Odalovic emphasized that, through concrete activities of training and

practical implementation in diplomatic and consular missions, European standards and values would be implemented in an extremely important area of regular migration in line with the best EU practices in the field of visa policy.

Deputy Head of EU Delegation to Serbia Oskar Benedict attended the signing ceremony and said that the two Ministries would cooperate even more closely in the future concerning the efficient regular migration monitoring including good coordination, data and strategic information exchange and reaching of common decisions on visa procedure as well as monitoring of regular migration flows.

The ceremony was also attended by the Netherlands Ambassador, Deputy Austrian Ambassador and the Slovenian Consul, representatives of international organizations as well as by senior officials of the National Employment Service and the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees and Migration.