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Twinning is an instrument launched by the European Commission in 1998. It is envisaged as an administrative cooperation related to provision of assistance to beneficiary countries in the process of strengthening administrative and judiciary capacities for the purpose of implementation of the Acquis of the European Union. The primary objective of Twinning projects is providing assistance to beneficiary countries in the establishment of modern and efficient administration by focusing on structure, human resources and management skills required for harmonization of national legislation with the Acquis of the European Union.



The European Union's IPA Programme for Croatia

Twinning light project between the
Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia
and the
Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

“Support to the National Visa System”



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

Objective of this project

The overall objective of this project is the further alignment of Croatia's national visa system with the EU visa system:

- To improve capacities of the Diplomatic Missions and Consular Posts (DM/CPs) staff regarding the process of visa issuance.
- To continue the alignment of Croatian visa legislation with further developments in the EU/Schengen acquis

Timetable and budget

The project was circulated on a call for proposals to all EU member states in the beginning of 2012. Finland was selected to implement the project in the summer of 2012.

The project implementation period is between 2 September 2013 and 2 March 2014.

A total of 224 working days will be conducted by 8 experts from Finland and Romania.

The total budget for the project is 250 000 euros.

The project is funded from the European Union's Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA). The Instrument for Pre-Accession is the means by which the EU supports reforms in the 'enlargement countries' with financial and technical help. The IPA funds build up the capacities of the countries throughout the accession process.

Project activities

1. Review of Croatia's national visa legislation with recommendations for harmonisation with the EU Acquis.
2. Training of Croatia's diplomatic missions' and consular posts' staff on the processing of the EU visa applications, the modification of issued visas and on the organisation of the visa sections and the local Schengen cooperation in the third countries.
3. Streamlining of the Visa system procedures regarding the detection of falsified and counterfeited documents at the diplomatic missions, consular posts and Border Crossing Points.
4. Training of diplomatic missions' and consular posts' staff to detect falsified and counterfeited documents.

Participating organisations

The main beneficiary of this project is the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia.

The implementing body of the project is the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The experts conducting the training and analysis in the project come from:

- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
- Border Guard of Finland
- National Bureau of Investigation, Finnish Police
- General Inspectorate of Border Police, Romania

Finland has been chosen to implement this project due to its significant and extensive experience in issuing Schengen visas to third country nationals. Finland's Consulate General in St. Petersburg is one of the largest visa centres for Schengen visas.

Long-term benefits for Croatia

With EU membership the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia has come under ever increasing pressure to streamline its visa procedures due to a high increase in the amount of visa applications. Future Schengen membership necessitates for full implementation of relevant rules and procedures.

This project assists Croatia in implementing the relevant practices, procedures and legislation that are pre-conditions for joining the Schengen area. Croatia is currently a Schengen candidate country and aims to become a member in the future.

The project is a significant step for Croatia in achieving Schengen membership.

In practical terms the visa training schemes developed during the project will be used by Croatia's Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs for a long time. All the publications and presentations prepared by the project experts will become the property of the Croatian Government.

A thorough training in visa issuing procedures and the detection of falsified documents may help in combating transnational crime and illegal activities.

Project co-ordination

The project is led by Ms Päivi Blinnikka (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland) and Ms Maja Teider (Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia).

Technical advice to project co-ordination is provided by the Central Finance and Contracting Agency (CFCA).

The Embassy of Finland in Zagreb kindly provides practical assistance in the implementation of activities.