

D. Trofimovs: further work is needed to improve the EU's visa policy

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On 9 March, State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior Dimitrijs Trofimovs participated in the meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of the European Union (EU) in Brussels to discuss the necessary changes to the existing EU visa policy. This is due to the increase in the number of asylum applications from third countries with which a visa-free regime has been concluded, as well as the lack of an existing monitoring mechanism for certain third countries.

At the meeting, participants discussed the need to reassess the existing criteria for establishing a visa-free regime, as well as for ending such a regime. It should be noted that discussions at expert level meetings currently indicate broad support for the idea of ensuring a better balance between the criteria to be taken into account for both granting and suspending visa waivers.

Latvia, like other participants in the meeting, expressed its support for the need to improve the EU's capacity to react quickly and decisively to situations where visa exemptions have a negative impact on the EU, and stressed that the time is right to discuss the introduction of additional criteria to help assess the eligibility of third countries for a visa-free regime.

The second part of the meeting focused on improving cooperation with third countries, discussing the future of the EU's migration and asylum policy.

Latvia reiterated that effective cooperation with and support for third countries is a key prerequisite for tackling the root causes of irregular migration, reducing flows and improving return measures, as well as for combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling. In parallel, Member States, the Commission and EU agencies must make every effort to improve the implementation of existing legislation and continue to work actively on new legislation in the draft stage.

In addition, the meeting also discussed the progress made so far in the development of the interoperability architecture for EU

information systems used by Member States' competent authorities for crime prevention, border and migration management, as well as the way forward for the implementation of this major IT project. Latvia believes that it is essential to focus on quality rather than speed in the implementation of this project, thus ensuring that the end result is an interoperability architecture for EU information systems that is both substantively and technically sound, and truly sustainable.

It should be noted here that on 7 March, the latest improvements to the Schengen Information System, one of the components of the EU Information System Interoperability Architecture, implemented by the Information Centre of the Ministry of the Interior, were implemented in Latvia. The improved system will help strengthen the fight against serious crime and terrorism, ensuring a high level of security in the EU, and help manage migration.

Prepared by:

Ministry of the Interior

Communication Department

kn@iem.gov.lv

Komunikācijas nodaļa

 +371 67219363



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