

**ROMANIA AND BULGARIA WILL SIGN THE AGREEMENT ON THE BORDER BETWEEN THE TWO STATES**

**- on this occasion, the Home Affairs Ministers of the two countries will analyze the partnership between Romania and Bulgaria in view EU Accession -**

On Monday, Romania and Bulgaria are signing, after four years of negotiations, the *Agreement on the border between the two states*.

The event is taking place on the occasion of the official visit that the Bulgarian Home Affairs Minister, Rumen Petkov, is paying in Romania upon the invitation of his Romanian counterpart official, Vasile Blaga; this visit represents an important moment in the context of the diplomatic undertakings of the Romanian authorities, in the period prior to the E.U. accession.

This Agreement, which regulates the co-operation between the border authorities from Romania and Bulgaria, will replace the similar document now in operation, which is currently out-of date as it was signed over 30 years ago.

The signing of this Agreement supplements the intense co-operation which Romania and Bulgaria are developing in the matters relating to common border surveillance, which has been materialized so far in a series of actions meant to increase the rigorousness of the border control, as well as in facilitating the border crossing for the Romanian and Bulgarian nationals.

Among the most important aspects of this co-operation there is the control at the Romanian-Bulgarian border after the principle “**one single stop for control**” after the two countries join the European Union. The system was tested during this week at the cross border point at Giurgiu within the framework of an experiment, and it involves a one-stop control. All the formalities will be carried out in common points by both Romanian and Bulgarian authorities, which will significantly reduce the waiting time.

Another issue on the agenda of the talks between the two Home Affairs Ministers will be the evaluation of the results obtained and the analysis of the progress achieved in view of Romania’s and Bulgaria’s joining the European Union in January 2007, process within the framework of which the two states made a partnership highly appreciated by the representatives of the European Commission and mentioned in the latest Monitoring Report.

Also on Monday, the Police Heads of the two countries will sign a Common Programme of Co-operation for 2006-2007, for enforcing the Bilateral Agreement between Romania and Bulgaria on co-operation regarding the countering of organised crime, trafficking in stupefying, psychotropic substances and precursors, terrorism and other types of serious crimes.

**THE CRIME RATE COMMITTED BY ROMANIANS ABROAD IS GOING DOWN**

The support given by the structures of the Ministry of Administration and Interior to the foreign authorities with the view to identify and track the Romanians who commit crimes and offences on other states territory has led to a gradual reduction of the crime rate and, implicitly, to a better image of Romania abroad.

A significant example, from this particular point of view, is the Austrian area where the criminality caused by Romanian citizens has registered a much lower level, being no longer considered a phenomenon.

Between 2003 and 2004, the number of Romanians involved in criminal activities in Austria was over 4,700. In 2005, the number got down significantly, reaching the level of about 2,880. The same trend can be noticed during the first semester of 2006, for the number of Romanians involved in such activities went down to about 370.

In order to reach the goals and accomplish the tasks within the accession process to the European Union, the Ministry of Administration and Interior goes further on intensifying the international co-operation, by using all existing channels, seeking and initiating, together with its European partners, new initiatives in this regard.

One of the successful projects carried out by our institution is REFLEX Romania, a British-Romanian inter-institutional working group that was created with the view to enhance the data and intelligence flow, leading to a better combating of Romanian illegal migration and trafficking in human beings, on the British route.

From the very beginning, in 2002, till 2005, REFLEX Project Romania contributed to the dismantling of 21 criminal networks, 136 persons being put under arrest, out of which 19 were foreign citizens. The success registered at the central level was a good reason for enlarging the project by setting up 14 new REFLEX sub-departments, at the level of all Brigades of Combating Organized Criminality.

As a consequence, between August 2005 – June 2006, the activities carried out at the level of all REFLEX sub-departments led to the charging of 344 persons (331 Romanians and 13 foreign citizens) involved in organized crime activities, more particularly in the field of trafficking in human beings and illegal migration, 136 being put under preventive arrest, the percentage being of 39.5.

A total novelty for Romania was the first video connection between Romania and the UK, by means of which Romanian witnesses were heard live in a trial being under process in the UK. That was an operation carried out by both REFLEX Project Romania representatives and the British Police.

On the occasion of the official visit at REFLEX Project Romania Headquarters paid by Mr. Charles CLARKE, the British Home Office Minister, the British high official appreciated the activity and the results obtained so far, and, at the same time, by means of “The Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Administration and Interior from Romania and the Home Office from the UK”, he offered financial support for the REFLEX Project Romania, till March 2007

➤ ***M.o.A.I. offers support the E.U. authorities to identify the Romanians who commit crimes abroad***

The operations carried out by the Romanian legal attachés and liaison officers accredited abroad, as well as the prompt data and intelligence exchange at international level, have proved that our country is a trusting reliable partner in the fight against trans-national criminality.

The activity performed by the International Police Co-operation Center officers (INTERPOL National Bureau, EUROPOL National Unit, SIRENE Office) of the MoAI, regarding the communication with the international police authorities, registered a significant development, the number of assistance requests, (with the view to identify suspects) sent by foreign and Romanian authorities, reaching a number of 5,199 during the first semester of 2006, comparing to 4,652 during the first semester of 2005.

Out of these 5,199 assistance requests, the majority was sent by the Romanian legal attachés and liaison officers accredited abroad – 855, the ones of the foreign legal attachés and liaison officers accredited in Romania – 359, and via EUROPOL and INTERPOL – 1,435.

One more example in this particular field would be the request sent by the Belgian authorities to all INTERPOL Member States regarding the international pursuit of the fugitives from a Belgian prison, three of them being Romanians.

In this particular case, the INTERPOL National Bureau (MoAI) has taken over the Belgian colleagues' request and has asked for the support of the Criminal Investigation Directorate within the General Inspectorate of Romanian Police with the view to apply the necessary measures.

As a matter of fact, the operative data and intelligence exchange carried out by the Romanian authorities, via the International Police Co-operation Center within MoAI, and the correspondent foreign agencies has also proved its efficiency in some other cases, as well, including the ones regarding the localizing and putting under arrest of the foreign and Romanian citizens, who committed crimes in Romania, with the view to be.

Thus, during the first semester of 2006, almost 160 Romanians being convicted on charge of various crimes committed in our country were brought from abroad by the workers within the International Police Co-operation Center (IPCC), in order to expiate their prison sentences in Romania, the numbers being higher by 30%, comparing to the same period of time last year.

To the 160 extradited Romanians, we may add 230 persons who, on the basis of the information sent by the Romanian authorities, were found out and put under arrest abroad, with the view to be extradited to Romania. At the same time, during the above-mentioned period of time, 14 foreign citizens, internationally pursued, were found out and put under arrest, with the view to be extradited to the origin countries.

The Ministry of Administration and Interior will continue the collaboration with its European partners in order to prevent and combat trans-national criminality, for the only way to keep this phenomenon under control is to focus all efforts made by the authorities on the same direction.