

PRESS RELEASE

As of 31 August 2010, Bulgaria's preparation for accession to the Schengen Area largely takes place within the deadlines and there is reason to believe that the country will satisfy all membership criteria by 31 March 2011. That is the overall conclusion of the Open Society Institute – Sofia mid-term report on the civic monitoring of the implementation of the National Action Plan for Full Application of the Schengen Acquis and Lifting Internal Border Checks, presented to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Mr. Tsvetan Tsvetanov.

According to the overall evaluation of the civic monitoring carried out by Open Society Institute - Sofia, out of 48 measures, envisaged in the National Action plan with implementation deadline of 31st August 2010, 5 measures are considered not implemented or rather not implemented, whereas the other 43 are assessed as implemented or rather implemented.

4 measures related to the Schengen Information System and falling under Police and Security whose deadline has not expired yet are implemented ahead of time.

The largest number of implemented measures is observed in the area of Operation and Use of the Schengen Information System where out of 17 measures with implementation deadline as of 31st August 2010, 14 are assessed as implemented and 3 are rather implemented This area is subject to forthcoming evaluation mission in early December 2010.

The largest number of measures that are not implemented are in the area of Visas where three out of the 11 measures are not implemented or rather not implemented.

The experts recommend further acceleration of the adoption of certain by-laws related to the process of accession to Schengen; the National Assembly to include among the priority tasks for its autumn session the bills on the amendment of the Ministry of Interior Act and the Personal Data Protection Act, and to accelerate the implementation of the measures regarding the Visa Centre with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to the authors of the mid-term report, provided that the competent institutions undertake adequate measures, the identified delays could be overcome by the end of 2010.

By signing a Common Declaration on the Accession to the Schengen Area, the Ministers of Interior of Bulgaria and Romania assumed March 2011 as a common strategic goal for the accession to Schengen as a result of fulfilling all the necessary requirements. Bulgaria and Romania are currently in the phase of evaluation visits and these missions are carried out simultaneously. All the evaluations visits in the areas of police cooperation, personal data protection, visas and border control are completed. The mission for the evaluation of the Schengen Information System (SIS) is forthcoming.

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The mid-term report is available online at: www.eupi.eu и www.osi.bg