**IOM Missions in Bulgaria, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova kickstart awareness raising activities on labour mobility in Bulgaria**

The official launching event of the project “*Awareness raising for labour mobility in Bulgaria*”, implemented by the IOM Mission in Bulgaria and IOM Missions in Armenia, Georgia and Moldova, was held on the 25 January 2022. Mr. Zhora Sargsyan, Head of Labour and Employment Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Mr. Kalin Vasilev Anastasov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Bulgaria in the Republic of Armenia, Ms. Silja Kasmann, Deputy Head of Operations of the EU Delegation to Armenia, as well as the representatives of state authorities, civic society organizations and expert community from participating countries attended the Project launching event.

For Armenia the project aims to support the Government’s efforts in implementation of bilaterally signed agreement on regulation of labour mobility between the Republic of Armenia and Republic of Bulgaria and to contribute to safer and better managed labour mobility from Armenia (as well as from Georgia and Moldova) to Bulgaria. Based on the conducted labour market needs and gaps assessment of Bulgaria, targeted information campaigns on conditions and employment opportunities of Bulgaria, as well as outreach to citizens of Armenia (as well as Georgia and Moldova) are planned to be carried out. The project will empower migrant workers to make informed decisions on the labour migration prospects and manage their expectations on employment opportunities in Bulgaria.

Mr. Kalin Vasilev Anastasov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Bulgaria in the Republic of Armenia stressed the importance of cooperation between two countries in the area of migration: “*I am convinced that the agreement will contribute to the economic and social development of the two countries and will facilitate cultural exchange between our people*” – mentioned the Ambassador.

In her speech, Ms. Kasmann, Deputy Head of Operations of the EU Delegation to Armenia, underlined that labour migration should be seen as an opportunity both for the EU member states and Armenia. The idea of the project is to promote circular migration and inform people who work abroad about their rights in order to protect them from criminal networks.

An active discussion between the participants followed and a number of questions, raised by the Armenian authorities and expert community were clarified.

The Project launching event was concluded with the closing remarks of Mr. Radoslav Stamenkov, IOM Bulgaria Head of Office and Ms. Ilona Ter-Minasyan, Head of Office, IOM Armenia.

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