
ALBANIA, BELGIUM TO STRENGTHEN MEASURES AGAINST ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

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Albania and Belgium will work to strengthen cooperation on measures against illegal immigration, Albanian Deputy Interior Minister Roven Voda said Thursday in a joint press conference with visiting Belgian State Secretary of Asylum Policy and Migration Theo Francken.

"Albanians should not consider Belgium as the place of 'gold' and cannot seek asylum there," underlined Francken.

He said illegal immigration to Belgium is not absolutely an option and emphasized that Albanians should be well informed before going to Belgium, otherwise they will be sent back within 24 hours.

Last year, Belgium returned 678 illegal Albanian immigrants. Albania stands in the first five places for asylum applications in Belgium.

Meanwhile, Voda emphasized that Albania is determined to minimize the number of its nationals seeking asylum as Albania is a safe country.

Voda pointed out that since July 2017, the Albanian State Police strengthened measures at all points of border crossing, with a special focus on unaccompanied minors, prosecuting parents who leave unaccompanied minors in European Union countries.

"Albania has had intensive awareness-raising campaigns, taken administrative measures and proceedings for those facilitating and illegally seeking asylum. It has prosecuted police officers who allowed the passage of persons with irregular documentation to travel to Schengen countries and is determined to crack down on criminal groups that are involved in this activity," said Voda.

According to official data in the first three months of 2018, about 5,400 Albanian citizens were denied travel to EU countries due to lack of documentation.

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