
EUROPOL OPENS LIAISON OFFICE IN ALBANIA

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Europol's newly opened Liaison Office in Albania will further improve cooperation between the law enforcement authorities of the European Union (EU) and Albania, said a senior police officer here on Thursday.

Europol is the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation.

At the opening ceremony of the Liaison Office, Ardi Veliu, general director of Albania's State Police, underlined that cooperation with the law enforcement agencies of partner countries is one of the State Police's main priorities.

"The Albanian State Police is committed to contributing to the enhancement of regional public safety through cooperation with the police forces and partner law enforcement agencies," said Veliu.

He spoke highly of Europol's assistance in improving the analysis of criminal information and in conducting joint investigations and operations.

Veliu said the State Police aims to strengthen the fight against organized crime, international terrorism, narcotics traffic and illegal migration.

Interior Minister Sander Lleshaj, Europol Executive Director Catherine De Bolle and EU Ambassador in Tirana Luigi Soreca also attended the ceremony.

Ambassador Soreca said he was convinced that the work of the Europol Liaison Office will be very beneficial to EU-Albania police cooperation.

"I am confident that, with the presence of Alen Perusic as Europol liaison officer in Tirana, Albania will deliver more on law enforcement," said Soreca, who encouraged the Albanian police to exchange information with Europol in a more proactive manner.

"The Europol Liaison Office adds to the recent deployment of FRONTEX border guards at the end of May, which has already provided positive results in preventing illegal border crossing and arresting migrants' traffickers," Soreca said.

Lleshaj hailed the opening of the Europol Liaison Office and the prospect of stronger cooperation with this institution, saying Albania's efforts toward EU integration are becoming more and more concrete every day.

De Bolle called Liaison Office an important step towards further strengthening partnership and trust between the EU member states and the countries of the western Balkans.

"We need to align efforts to jointly tackle common challenges and cross-border threats. Europol is ready to support the Albanian authorities and connect the dots between criminal networks in Europe," De Bolle noted.

Albania is the first country in the western Balkans to host a Europol Liaison Office.

Europol signed an operational agreement with Albania in December 2013. The Europol liaison officer will work together with the Albanian police liaison officer stationed at Europol's headquarters in The Hague in supporting the EU member states and third-party partners in their investigations.

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