MEETING OF THE NATIONAL ANTI-TRAFFICKING COORDINATORS OF THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

11-12 March 2013, Sofia, Bulgaria

Meeting Conclusions

In the framework of the Brdo Process, chaired by Slovenia, the South-East European (SEE) National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators (NATC) met on **11 and 12 March 2013 in Sofia, Bulgaria** to share information about their efforts in combating trafficking in human beings, as well as to discuss overarching policies and consider concerted and innovative approaches to the issue. The group represents 10 countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. These meetings serve as an informal platform for exchange of ideas and are a catalyst for the development of strong partnerships in the region.

ICMPD acts as the Secretariat for the Brdo Process and supports the organization of the meetings.

The objectives of this first meeting for 2013, attended by nine of the national anti-trafficking coordinators or their representatives, were to:

- Share updates on current initiatives against trafficking in human beings in the different countries in the region;
- Discuss the involvement of and the partnership with the private sector in combating THB with representatives of Manpower Bulgaria and Serbia and Postbank;
- Learn about the procedures of harmonization and transposition of the EU trafficking directive into national legislation, shared by the EU Member State countries present at the meeting.

The National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators took the opportunity to discuss a number of issues in an informal setting.

Country updates

The countries present at the meeting shared their active engagement throughout the last couple of months, **depicting both a continuation of previous efforts and initiation of new activities in 2013**. The actions implemented in the region range from recurrent information prevention campaigns, to developing public-private partnerships and engaging the private sector, to hosting GRETA visits and providing input to the reports, to upgrading and streamlining the databases for the collection and effective management of data on THB. The forced begging of children continues to be a troubling issue across the region and so are relatively new trends, such child pornography on the internet.

Transposition of the EU directive

All three EU MS present at the meeting shared the opinion that their countries had already worked on aligning their legislation with the provisions of Directive 36. Yet, a couple of topics crystallized as particularly challenging to resolve at the national level; among them provisions on non-punishment of the victims, prevention policies and compensation of victims.

Some unexpected challenges have been highlighted: the resign of the Bulgarian and Slovenian governments which might lead to an infringement procedure initiated by the European Commission.

The Directive is also **recognized as a tool to put issues on the policy table** in the Member States, e.g. on the non-punishment of trafficked persons.

Priorities for the upcoming period

All countries continue to implement National Strategies and National Action Plans. While some will be adopting new strategic documents in the coming months, others will be consolidating the Office of the National Coordinator to create a more coherent structure. Prevention, mostly through awareness-raising campaigns continue to be a priority for most countries in the region, as does the assistance and reintegration of trafficked persons. Several countries are planning to expand or improve the capacities for victim protection especially with regards to children.

Overarching recommendations

- A discussion ensued about **the role of national rapporteurs vs. national anti-trafficking coordinators**, leading to an overall agreement that a more specific definition is necessary. Different models were discussed, with the model of the Ombudsman being also the national rapporteur being recognized as a good practice. This role shall be defined more precisely on EU level.
- **Expansion of the TRM Model** to include relevant countries of destination, most notably (Western) EU MS.
- Appeal for more **concrete regional cooperation** through joint projects, especially in the field of prevention and outreach to particularly vulnerable groups.
- ICMPD, as the Secretariat of the Brdo process, to **host on its website a section for the NATC meetings,** where the meeting conclusions and other relevant documents can be uploaded, as well as to provide links to all NC offices in the region.
- Involving private sector actors by establishing for example "**Local business coalitions**", based on the model of the Global Business Coalition.

Next steps

The next semi-annual meeting of the SEE NATC will take place in September 2013 and will be kindly hosted by the national Anti-trafficking Coordinator of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Samir Rizvo.

Following the initiative that the SEE NATC took at their last meeting in October 2012 to draft a declaration on trafficking in human beings and successfully presented it at the EU anti-trafficking day in Brussels, it was decided to **approach the EU anti-trafficking coordinator**, Ms Myria Vassiliadou, to introduce her to the work of the SEE NATC network and invite her to the next

meeting in September. ICMPD is to support the SEE NATC with drafting an invitation letter to Ms Vassiliadou, which will be co-signed by the National Coordinators of Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. As some of the countries represented in this group are also EU member states, the **aim of this invitation is to facilitate strengthening further the links between the EU and SEE** at the policy level.

Several topics already surfaced as important to put on the agenda for the next meeting. Among them are:

- A presentation/discussion on a draft "model law" on human trafficking;
- Inviting a representative of the "End Human Trafficking Now" initiative.

Furthermore, the "Cycling for freedom" event will commence in Sofia in September and go through a number of European capitals.