

# Meeting of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South Eastern Europe and Sweden

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3 – 4 November 2015, Stockholm, Sweden

## Meeting Report

On 3 - 4 November 2015, a Meeting of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators (NATCs) of South Eastern Europe (SEE) and Sweden was held in Stockholm, Sweden. The meeting was hosted by the County Administrative Board of Stockholm (CABS) and co-organised by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in the framework of the project *“Development of a Transnational Referral Mechanism for Sweden (SE-TRM II) - Targeted support to CABS”*.

The meeting had three interlinked objectives:

- **To facilitate** the development and strengthening of networks between the National Coordinators engaged in the fight against trafficking in human beings (THB);
- **To discuss** the current and the future challenges in the fight against trafficking in human beings, specifically taking into consideration the impact of the current refugee crisis on the vulnerability of the displaced people to trafficking and exploitation;
- **To present** good practices in the development and implementation of national/transnational referral mechanism.

National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of Albania (Ms. Elona Hoxha), Bulgaria (Ms. Kamelia Dimitrova), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mr. Samir Rizvo), Croatia (Mr. Branko Sočanac), Kosovo<sup>1</sup> (Mr. Milan Radojević), Macedonia (Ms. Anastasija Ilijeska), Moldova (Ms. Ecaterina Berejan), Montenegro (Mr. Zoran Ulama), Slovenia (Mr. Sandi Čurin), Sweden (Mr. Patrik Cederlöf) and Romania (Mr. Axel Maximilian Nicolae) were present at the meeting. Members of the Swedish National Task Force against Prostitution and Trafficking were also present at the meeting. The representatives of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) attended as observers.

The Swedish National Anti-trafficking Coordinator, Mr. Patrik Cederlöf and the ICMPD Eastern Dimension Director, Mr. Martijn Pluim opened the meeting highlighting the importance of the current and future cooperation in the area of combating THB, specifically in light of the current refugee crisis and consequently, the vulnerability of the migrants to trafficking and exploitation. Mr. Cederlöf stressed that the momentum is crucial to discuss the situation of a large number of **vulnerable minors that travel unaccompanied along the migrant routes in Europe**, initiating a discussion for **identifying more adequate protection measures, services and procedures catering for the needs of these children**. Mr. Pluim pointed out the **importance of the transnational cooperation** in this regard and expressed great satisfaction to see that ICMPD's original development of a model for transnational referral of trafficked persons is currently expanding in Sweden.

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<sup>1</sup> Under UNSCR 1244



The meeting continued with a tour-de-table where the National Coordinators provided an overview of the objectives and priorities of their countries in combating THB. Presenting the current activities and initiatives they further emphasised the **need to focus on a coordinated transnational approach** in combating trafficking in human beings.

The next session focussed on the impact of the current refugee crisis on the vulnerability of displaced people to trafficking and exploitation in the SEE region. It was pointed out that **addressing the vulnerability of migrants to trafficking and identifying the causes that generate this situation** should be key common priorities in the upcoming period. The Swedish National Coordinator discussed the recent developments in Sweden, specifically related to groups of African children begging on the streets as a relatively new phenomenon in the country. Since the National Coordinators confirmed that similar cases have been observed in their countries as well, it was noted that those children can be considered potential victims even though there is no clear evidence that they are trafficked. The National Coordinators agreed that the mixed migration flows primarily from refugee producing countries, specifically the unaccompanied minors among them, are at **great risk of falling into trafficking situations not only along the routes but also upon arrival in destination countries**. Accordingly, they concluded that the scope of transnational collaboration by anti-trafficking actors should be expanded to reflect a broad range of protection concerns, taking into consideration the different forms of exploitation. Furthermore, it was pointed out that **identification measures should be initiated and strengthened** in order to recognise eventual trafficking cases among migrant groups and asylum seekers. According to the National Coordinators, this goal can be achieved by including all the relevant stakeholders in the **identification, protection and decision-making processes** related to the vulnerable groups of migrants originating from Syria and the other crisis affected countries.



Furthermore, Mr. Cederlöf gave a presentation on the Swedish legislation regarding prostitution. Since 1999 Sweden prohibits the purchase of sexual services but not the selling. The legislation has resulted in a decrease in street prostitution and authorities claim that the legislation has made Sweden into a less desirable country for traffickers. In the followed discussion, the participants noted that this is an interesting legislation and that the Swedish practice, with a certain adaptation, might be applicable in other countries as well.

Following the presentation by the Swedish National Coordinator on the anti-trafficking institutional structure in Sweden, as well as the presentations about the organisation and functioning of the National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria, the National Coordinators reconfirmed the importance of providing sustainable **transnational referral mechanisms (TRMs)**, with standardised procedures for identification and referral of trafficked persons between countries of origin and destination. They also noted the added benefits that the TRM development has on refining and complementing NRMs and **facilitating government/NGO partnerships**. The National Coordinators agreed that **TRM procedures should be adapted in order to provide adequate responses to trafficking for labour exploitation and child begging**.

Pointing out that most of the trafficking cases in Sweden originate from the SEE countries and reconfirming the importance of the regional platform for developing future anti-trafficking activities and initiatives, the Swedish NATC expressed his willingness to join the NATC meetings in the future as well as to continue the cooperation with his SEE colleagues. Furthermore, the National Coordinators agreed on the importance of **creating sustainable partnerships between the government institutions and civil society stakeholders** through the consolidation of NRMs and strengthening transnational cooperation in the anti-trafficking response.



**In summary**, the main outcomes of the meeting were:

- Common **challenges related to the vulnerability of migrants** along the European routes and in the destination countries were identified, such as **lack of identification of potential victims of trafficking**. It was agreed that **adequate protection measures for migrants** should be developed and put into practice in order to prevent trafficking situations;
- It was concluded that targeted efforts should be taken to **create specific measures, services and procedures catering for the needs of unaccompanied minors transiting through migration routes in Europe**.
- In order to provide better protection for vulnerable migrants and potential trafficking cases, **increased awareness and transnational cooperation** between all relevant anti-trafficking stakeholders is needed. It was agreed to maximise the **effective use of the existing mechanisms for law enforcement cooperation**, such as Joint Investigation Teams (JITs), as well as the other existing platforms for transnational cooperation;
- The importance of **providing sustainable transnational referral mechanisms** with standardised procedures for identification and referral of the trafficked persons between countries of origin and destination was reconfirmed;
- It was decided that the National Coordinators will direct their efforts towards **further strengthening their anti-trafficking network** by supporting the development of transnational referral mechanisms, participating in the existing platforms for cooperation and developing new partnerships in Europe and beyond.

## Meeting of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South- Eastern Europe and Sweden

3 – 4 November 2015

County Administrative Board of Stockholm, Hantverkargatan 29, 112 21

Stockholm, Sweden

### List of Participants

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