

Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-East Europe

Strategy Paper 2020 – 2024

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Chair



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

Secretariat



ICMPD

International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

Part 1: Introduction

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators (NATC) of South-East Europe (SEE). The Network was created at the Ministerial Conference held in Brdo pri Kranju on 20 October 2010, upon the initiative of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia. The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) was assigned to serve as the Network's Secretariat.

The Network is a state-led platform that brings together Anti-Trafficking Coordinators (ATC) from the SEE region and ensures fulfilment of the commitments agreed at a Ministerial level. At the same time, it offers an informal and flexible dialogue venue that serves as a forum for sharing good practices, discussing the needs of the participating countries and identifying the areas for potential cooperation in the future. Essentially, it has become the go-to cooperation mechanism on anti-trafficking response and policy-making in the SEE. Since 2011, the Network holds regular meetings discussing trending issues in the fight against human trafficking.

Since its establishment, two joint declarations have been issued endorsing the Network - in 2012 and 2018. The 2012 Declaration outlined the network's priorities in combating human trafficking, also reflecting the synergies between the EU anti-trafficking strategy at the time and the progressive efforts made in SEE to tackle the issue. The March 2018 Ministerial Declaration, endorsed at the Brdo Process Ministerial Meeting gave a much-needed boost to the regional cooperation on anti-trafficking.

Today, the Network wishes to take the achievements of the first decade further, strengthening its mandate and role as the coordination mechanism in the SEE region. The intention was first coined during the discussion held at the Network's meeting in Bečići in May 2019. Subsequently, ICMPD in close coordination with the Anti-Trafficking Office of Slovenia developed and distributed a questionnaire to all Network members to guide the process. Through this consultative process, the Network members were gauged about the Network's added value, its position, and the priorities.

The inputs received guided the formulation of this Strategy Paper, which aims to set out the Network's agenda for the next five years (2020-2024).

Part 2: The Added Value of the Network

The cooperation of ATCs within the framework of the Network has contributed to the strengthening of the overall cooperation in the region. This, in turn, has particularly through the exchanging of experiences and good practices, contributed to the strengthening of the readiness to counter human trafficking on a national level.

The work of the Network has been pivotal in identifying common issues of interest and defining joint actions. The zoomed-in nature of the Network's meetings has allowed the members to work towards a more consolidated regional approach. This has, on one hand, led to an increased number

of bilateral agreements on combating human trafficking and the franchising of good practices such as the concept of a task force for combating human trafficking and irregular migration or introducing statutory guarantees on non-punishment of victims of human trafficking.

At the same time, improved cooperation plays a role in the context of EU accession. The relationships of participants that are already in the EU with those in the EU accession process, those expecting to open accession talks and finally potential candidates bring the dynamics of the EU accession process also to the Network.

Here the Network has offered a valuable forum for closer interaction between the EU and the Network's participants. For instance, the Network was instrumental in materialising the initiative of Bulgaria's EU Presidency in preparing a Non-Paper on Combating Human Trafficking in the Western Balkans. This non-paper guided the discussions at the international forum on 31 May 2018 addressing the combating human trafficking in SEE in the context of the EU accession process and it is also meant to serve as the compass for EU's engagements in the field of countering human trafficking in the Western Balkans.

Part 3: Strategic Priorities for 2020-2024

Main Goal and Vision

The main goal of the Network for the period of 2020-2024 is maintaining and advancing regional cooperation in the fight against human trafficking, as well as developing cooperation vis-à-vis the actors outside the SEE region. In order to achieve this goal, the sustained operational capability of the Network is crucial.

The following measures are proposed:

- (i) Introducing rotational chair of the Network | Annually rotating chairing function would relieve Slovenia from solely bearing the responsibilities of a chair. Rotating chairmanship would also allow for the members to seek better traction and attention on the issues that are of particular importance and concern for them.
- (ii) Determining the financial framework | Upon introducing the concept of rotating chairmanship, each member to assume the function of the chair would plan in advance, in partnership with the other members and ICMPD, fundraising initiatives with an aim of securing the financial resources required to match the work plan, which is to be agreed by the end of the previous chairing period.
- (iii) Installing the Network's administrative capability | ICMPD, which was entrusted with the task of the Secretariat from the Network's creation, should continue to perform the tasks. It will do so in coordination with each incoming chair in order to support the budgeting of the forthcoming annual work plan and help with fundraising. ICMPD will thereafter work with an incumbent chair in order to provide the administrative and logistical support to the implementation of the approved work plan of the chair.

- (iv) A single platform | Finally, putting in place the above-mentioned structural elements will enable the Network to reintroduce itself as the sole regional coordination and cooperation platform in the field of combating human trafficking. This, in turn, will serve to improve synergies with relevant initiatives of other actors, including those of regional and international organisations and funding priorities of international donors, and to avoid duplication and overlap of efforts. The Network should be the only such venue for inter-state dialogue on matters concerning combating human trafficking.

Strategic domains and examples of topics of interest

The following issues and topics of joint interest were identified by the Network members in the consultation process:

Prevention

- (i) Raising public awareness and improving prevention efforts remain pivotal for making headway against the crime. Uniform campaigns with uniform messages on certain matters of common interest (such as addressing trafficking for sexual exploitation, can be developed and implemented in the region or part of a region. Discuss devising a common prevention campaign addressing the trafficking offenders.
- (ii) Devoting particular attention to the field of new technologies and their use in the processes of human trafficking, specifically in the recruitment phase.
- (iii) Advancing the systems of public procurement in the Network's member states in order to ensure the respective supply chains are free from human trafficking, slavery, child and forced labour.

Protection

- (i) Maintaining the focus on the continued mixed migration flows through the Network's member states and continue advancing the skills of frontline responders to enable a holistic and human rights-based response from the perspective of combating human trafficking.
- (ii) Continue exploring modalities for establishing compensation mechanisms for trafficked persons within the compensation mechanisms foreseen for victims of crime.
- (iii) Taking account of the efforts undertaken and still required in order to ensure non-punishment of trafficked persons.
- (iv) Further exchange of experience and seeking out best practices in addressing human trafficking for the purposes of forced labour, in particular forced begging.

Prosecution

- (i) Countering the culture of impunity by striving to make investigations and prosecutions more effective through capacity building, information exchange, law enforcement, and judicial cooperation.
- (ii) Reviewing practices that have proven successful, such as the use of Joint Investigation Teams.

International Cooperation

Strengthening regional cooperation by:

- (i) Expanding cooperation with the countries of destination outside the Network for trafficked persons originating from the region. For example, organising a high-level conference with the involvement of destination countries from the EU. Similarly, exploring ways to improve cooperation and coordination with the countries from which due to their position or situation, for instance in the context of increased mixed migratory flows, bear significance to the Network's member states.
- (ii) Facilitating bi-lateral meetings or other working formats between the interested Network members on specific topics where good practices are available, such as victim compensation or determining indicators for identification among third-country nationals.
- (iii) Regular revision and update of the 2018 Non-paper to guide the EU's position and dialogue with the Network's member states regarding their efforts to combat human trafficking to the background of EU *acquis*.
- (iv) Initiating a discussion on improving the integration of SEE's Transnational Referral Mechanism with its counterparts within the EU.

Having started in 2010 as a "members-only club" exclusively for the anti-trafficking practitioners in SEE, the Network has evolved into a platform of interactive dialog that offers a well-suited vehicle for advocacy aimed at policy and legislative changes as well as in developing and implementing regional and bilateral targeted capacity-building initiatives to respond to human trafficking challenges in the region. Having in mind that ICMPD has a long-standing working relationship with these governments (most being ICMPD Member States) in delivering technical capacity-building assistance and policy development support in human trafficking and migration issues, ICMPD can ensure swift and quality delivery of regional initiatives in cooperation with the Network.