



Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-East Europe

Strategy Paper 2025 – 2029

Meeting of the Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of
South-East Europe

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Chair



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

Secretariat



ICMPD
International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

Part 1: Introduction

The Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-East Europe (NATC SEE) is a state-led platform that celebrates in 2025 its 15-year anniversary. Established in 2010 at the Ministerial Conference held in Brdo pri Kranju upon the initiative of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia, it brings together Anti-Trafficking Coordinators from the region to ensure fulfilment of the commitments agreed at a Ministerial level.

The members of the Network acknowledge it as a vehicle for regional and transnational cooperation in addressing trafficking in human beings and sharing information, experience and best practices among the stakeholders. Throughout its 15 years of work, NATC SEE has played a crucial role in improving information exchange, strengthening the capacities of the national stakeholders to investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking in human beings, protect and assist victims, and expanding collaboration with civil society organizations, private sector, etc. Furthermore, the Network promotes harmonization of national anti-trafficking policies with regional and international legal instruments and standards, critical for consistency, efficiency and impact.

In 2020, NATC SEE introduced its first Strategy Paper 2020-2024. Anticipating its expiration a decision was made at the 18th Network meeting on 7 June 2024 in Zagreb, Croatia, to continue guiding collective strategic efforts by developing a new Strategy Paper for the period of 2025-2029. In close collaboration with the Anti-Trafficking Office of the Republic of Slovenia, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) replicated the consultation process used for the development of the first Strategy Paper. This process was guided by a questionnaire sent by ICMPD to all Network members, encouraging input on the Network's value, its positioning, and priorities. The feedback collected informed the formulation of the new Strategy Paper, establishing the Network's agenda for the next five years.

The new Strategy Paper has been developed acknowledging the amended EU Anti-Trafficking Directive and the resulting obligation for EU member states to update their national anti-trafficking legislation. Emerging trends in region of South-East Europe (SEE) - such as ongoing mixed migration and labour migration flows, a rise in labour exploitation, and incidents of trafficking in human beings linked to cyber criminality and technology-facilitated methods - combined with the growing pattern of Network members becoming hubs for victim exploitation, demand a proactive and effective response from the responsible authorities.

Part 2: Strategic Priorities for 2025-2029

Main Goal and Vision

The main goal of the Network remains maintaining and advancing regional cooperation in the fight against trafficking in human beings, as well as developing cooperation vis-à-vis the actors outside the SEE region. The anti-trafficking developments in the SEE region require measures to broaden the Network's scope of operation in order to achieve the set goals:

- (i) Expanding the membership of the Network to countries along the migration routes and/or countries with ongoing armed conflicts. The growing complexity of trafficking in human beings, linked to migration patterns, requires broader collaboration to address the various forms of trafficking in human beings, including labour and sexual exploitation, and trafficking for forced criminal activities. The cooperation between the anti-trafficking actors from the countries along the migration routes is relevant and important to preventing and combating this phenomenon.
- (ii) Inclusion of new actors, such as representatives of the technology sector, tourism, and employer and employee associations in the work of the Network.
- (iii) Expanding the NATC SEE meetings to allow for a broader stakeholder involvement (civil society organisations, academia, private sector, etc.) and more targeted discussions (incl. thematic meetings, introducing virtual/hybrid format of meetings) to enrich the dialogue, foster inclusivity and bring new perspectives.
- (iv) Introducing a standardized methodology for data collection and monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy Paper.

Strategic domains and examples of topics of interest

The Strategy paper reflects the changing nature of trafficking in human beings in the SSE region and the complexities introduced by new technologies, migration patterns, and variety of socio-economic factors.

Prevention

- (i) Targeted prevention and awareness. Trafficking networks often exploit individuals from specific socio-economic, ethnic, or geographic backgrounds, targeting vulnerable groups such as women, children, marginalised ethnic communities, and migrants. Similarly, certain regions serve as consistent hubs for origin, transit, or destination within trafficking routes driven by different factors. Addressing these dynamics through targeted prevention, education and awareness strategies is essential for disrupting the trafficking cycle.

- (ii) Raising awareness among the general public and the stakeholders on the potential risks of use of new technologies, the Internet and social media for trafficking, exploitation and abuse.
- (iii) Trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation continues to be one of the most significant forms of trafficking in the region with cases in sectors such as agriculture, domestic work, construction, etc.
- (iv) Significant efforts are needed in tackling trafficking in human beings by addressing the supply chains, incl. within the public procurement frameworks implementing dedicated prevention strategies and exchanging experience and good practices in the prevention and identification of such cases.

Protection

- (i) Strengthening the victims support and reintegration. Many victims face challenges accessing basic services and receiving even minimal support. Therefore, there is a need for more state-supported interventions building on victim-centered and trauma-informed care and assistance that will help to ensure the long-term solutions for victims, incl. socio-economic inclusion.
- (ii) Improving the local response mechanisms to trafficking (anti-trafficking teams, mobile teams, etc.) in order to prevent and protect victims of trafficking in human beings (incl. transborder cases).
- (iii) Involving survivors of trafficking in human beings in the design and implementation of any anti-trafficking interventions, incl. protection and prevention, is a necessary predictor for their effectiveness.
- (iv) Addressing vulnerabilities to THB in the context of migration, incl. the war in Ukraine and its long-term effects on vulnerable population. The ongoing migration flows, particularly from Asia, continue to pose significant risks in terms of human trafficking and exploitation of the migrants. Addressing specificities of the state responses to THB in the context of migration to ensure effective and targeted interventions.

Prosecution

- (i) Stronger focus on the cyber-enabled trafficking in human beings. Committing the crime of trafficking in human beings increasingly moves online, as the criminal groups shift to digital platforms. This development requires a more nuanced approach to cybercrime and technology's role in trafficking in human beings. New forms of trafficking linked to these advancements, as well as challenges in victim identification and protection need to be addressed.

- (ii) Supporting the law enforcement cooperation and training, exchange of experience and new crime prevention strategies.
- (iii) Supporting stronger cyber-monitoring capacities and cooperation of law enforcement to detect trafficking networks, incl. online recruitment and exploitation, and to conduct digital investigations of cases of trafficking in human beings.

International Cooperation

- (i) Enhancing cross-border cooperation and intelligence sharing to ensure adequate risk assessment, safe return, and effective reintegration of trafficking victims.
- (ii) Supporting the real-time information exchange and joint operations to combat transnational trafficking networks, incl. cross-border cooperation of established local anti-trafficking mechanisms.

By addressing such key aspects of cooperation, the Network can play a pivotal role in enhancing regional anti-trafficking efforts, protecting vulnerable populations, and more effectively dismantling criminal trafficking networks.

Part 3: Operationalisation of the Strategy Paper 2025-2029

The Strategy Paper's four priority areas - prevention, protection, prosecution, and international cooperation will be operationalised in alignment with the available financial, administrative, and human resources. This process will be guided by the collective input of Network members and structured around the following action clusters:

- Joint information campaign on the occasion of the International Day against Trafficking in Persons or other international day.
- Joint action days against trafficking in human beings.
- Bilateral/multilateral meetings and work on a common cross-border cases of trafficking in human beings, e.g. developing collaborative mechanisms for cross-border investigations and support for victims to improve the effectiveness of the anti-trafficking efforts.
- Joint research on a topic of common interest to the members of the Network, e.g. a research paper on current trafficking in human beings trends in the Network members, trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation in the region, or the impact of migration flows on the trafficking in human beings patterns.
- Joint trainings and thematic workshops on dedicated topics of interest.

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