

General Overview of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2015

The National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) was established on the grounds Article 4 of the Law for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and aims to define and direct the implementation of the national policy on countering trafficking in human beings.

The NCCTHB is a collective body to the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, which consists of a chairman, two vice-presidents (whose appointment is done by and depends on the chairman), with the chairperson of the National Commission appointed by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Council of Ministers. The Commission shall include a Deputy Prime Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Policy, Deputy Minister of the Interior, Deputy Minister of Justice, Deputy Minister of Health, Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Deputy Chairperson of the State Agency for National Security, Vice President of the National Agency for Child Protection, Deputy Chair of the Central Commission for Child Protection & the Fight against Juvenile Delinquency, as identified by the respective ministers and chairpersons. The NCCTHB additionally includes those appointed by the President of the Supreme Court of Cassation, the Chief Prosecutor and the Director of the National Investigation Service and their deputies. According to the Rules and Regulations of the National Commission for the Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, the NCCTHB is assisted by an administration composed of nine posts, including the Secretary of the Commission in charge of her administration.

By decision No. 46 of the Council of Ministers of 29 January 2015, Mrs. Meglena Kuneva, Deputy Prime Minister for Coordination of European Policies and Institutional Affairs, is the Chair of the National Commission. Ms. Antoaneta Vassileva continues to be the Secretary of the NCCTHB until the end of March, and from the end of March to the end of May 2015 to the NCCTHB has no designated Secretary. By an order of 01 June 2015, Mrs. Kamelia Dimitrova becomes the Secretary of the NCCTHB.

The National Commission shall carry out its activities periodically, where meetings are open (with the option of holding closed sessions, only if they provide or discuss classified information, there exists a risk to the public, and for national security) and are held with the participation of the members of the NCCTHB. Representatives of non-profit legal entities and international organisations with representatives in Bulgaria who are engaged in trafficking prevention activities may participate in the meetings as observers.

Two meetings of the NCCTHB were held in 2015. The first meeting was held on 12 March 2015, which saw the adoption of the 2015 National Program for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings & Protection of Victims of Trafficking, and a report of the NCCTHB in relation to its accomplishments in

the field of preventing trafficking in human beings throughout 2014, with the National Program additionally being approved by Council of Ministers Resolution No. 598/6.08.2015. The second and final meeting of 2015 was held on 3 December 2015 in which it was submitted and approved by the members, a proposal for the elaboration of a National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in line with the next European strategy; updating the National Mechanism for Referral and Support of Trafficked Persons in Bulgaria; proposals to conclude agreements with member institutions of the NCCTHB to build a single system for monitoring and analysing data about victims of trafficking.

Alongside the NCCTHB is a functioning Permanent Level Working Group (PWG) which supports the work of the Commission and especially its Administration (ANCCTHB) (a proposal included in the draft National Program adopted at a meeting of the Commission in 2006). The PWG consists of leading experts on trafficking in human beings throughout various institutions and international and non-governmental organisations, and it was created for and served as an external monitoring and evaluation tool for the NCCTHB in its activities and policies on a national level.

Through the ANCCTHB, the Commission coordinates the interaction between individual agencies and organisations for the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act. The ANCCTHB also annually develops and presents for approval by the Council of Ministers, National Programs for the Prevention and Counteraction of Trafficking in Human Beings and Protection of Victims, as well as an Annual Report on the activities of the NCCTHB regarding the counteraction of trafficking in human beings and protection of victims in Bulgaria. Some of the other main tasks and functions of the NCCTHB according to the Anti-trafficking Act include:

- Establishes an organization for research, analysis and statistical reporting of data in the trafficking in human beings;
- Participation in international cooperation to prevent and counteract trafficking in human beings;
- Organization of information, explanatory and educational activities and campaigns for people in risk groups of trafficking in human beings;
- Development of training programs for staff to perform functions in relation to preventing and countering trafficking in human beings;
- Management and control of the activities of local commissions and protection centers;
- Assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings, including physical and psychological registration with non-profit legal entities providing shelter to victims of trafficking;

The National Commission is also part of the network of national rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms (NREMs) to the office of the EU Anti-Traffic

Coordinator. In connection with Directive 36/2011/EU, one of the main responsibilities of national rapporteurs is the monitoring of the implemented policy to prevent trafficking in human beings at a national level, as well as national and periodic data collection and reporting to the EU Anti-Traffic Coordinator. Additionally, the NCCTHB is part of the International Center for the Development of Migration Policy's (ICMPD) anti-trafficking coordinators for Southeast Europe which promotes the importance of international cooperation, the creation and implementation of policies, and the coordination of cases of victims of THB and helping the international investigation of such cases.

In its capacity as national coordinator and equivalent mechanism of national rapporteur on trafficking in human beings, the NCCTHB, through its administration, coordinates the work on signals of potential victims of trafficking- from their identification and referral, to supporting case investigation and reintegration of victims. This task is accomplished through the so-called National Mechanism for Referral and Support of Trafficked Persons in Bulgaria (NMR).

In connection with the providing protection and services to victims of THB, it is important to note that by the end of 2015 a draft documents on the minimum standards of shelter work and centers which provide assistance and protection to victims of THB will be finalised. Moreover, the ANCCCTHB has begun the process of drafting legislative changes directly affecting victims of THB, which will be given to the members of the NCCTHB in 2016.

Furthermore, and in line with the framework of the NCCTHB and a project component from the Bulgarian-Swiss Anti-Trafficking Program, are plans to initiate a process of exploring the need to initiate additional social services for victims of THB, with an aim to be established by the end of 2017.

The 2015 National Program for the Prevention and Counteraction of Trafficking in Human Beings and for the Protection of Victims

A major part of the implemented anti-trafficking policy is the realisation of a series of strategic and operational objectives which set the parameters for activities under the National Program. The Program, which consists of seven sections and seven strategic objectives, is being developed annually by experts to the NCCTHB and the Secretaries of the local committees (LCCTHB) by consulting with the PWG. The draft of the Program is provided to the members of the NCCTHB for coordination and approval, and is followed by formal adoption by the Council of Ministers (the 2015 Program was adopted by Council of Ministers Resolution No. 598/6.08.2015).

The seven sections of the 2015 Program include:

- Institutional and organisational measures;
- Prevention;
- Education and qualification of staff;

- Protection, recovery and reintegration of victims;
- Study, analysis and statistical data reporting in relation to THB;
- International cooperation;
- Legislative measures.