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## **International Conference on the interface between trafficking in human beings and asylum to be held in Sofia**

Strasbourg, 22.06.2015 - The Bulgarian National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human beings, the Council of Europe and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in partnership with the Hanns Seidel Foundation will be holding an International Conference on "The interface between protection of victims of trafficking in human beings and asylum", from 23 to 24 June 2015 in Sofia.

The organisation of the Conference coincides with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) and its first 4-year evaluation round. The event will gather government officials, representatives of the Council of Europe, IOM, UNHCR and the Hanns Seidel Foundation, lawyers, judges, academics, as well as civil society actors.

Refugees have increasingly become targets for human smugglers – who could potentially take advantage of their vulnerable situation. The growing flow of refugees coming to Europe has simultaneously increased the number of potential victims of trafficking in human beings. For their part, European States have been focusing on the assessment of asylum applications and the reception conditions of asylum-seekers. In this context, the specific needs of victims of trafficking in human beings deserve specific attention.

The conference will be a unique opportunity to determine how the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and the 1951 Geneva Convention on the status of refugees can effectively complement each other, with a view to ensuring to best possible level of victims' protection and assistance.

On this occasion, participants will be asked to reflect on the issue of identification of victims of trafficking in human beings in the framework of asylum procedures. Another task will be the assessment of the victims' protection needs, with special emphasis on the situation of unaccompanied minors. The discussions will then be followed by two workshops: one on the protection of the victims, and another on the impact of the Dublin III regulation in a trafficking context.

"As many European countries are facing massive migration flows, many of these migrants are at risk of becoming victims of trafficking in human beings once they reach the countries of destination. It is key that the identification procedures for trafficking victims work well so that they can benefit from the assistance and protection measures contained in the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention", has affirmed Gianluca Esposito, from the Council of Europe.

"Refugees and asylum-seekers may well become victims of trafficking in human beings, especially in times when unprecedented numbers of persons are fleeing violence and human rights violations, and are forced to cross borders in irregular manners. They fully deserve appropriate protection and assistance under international instruments", declared Gert Westerveen, UNHCR Representative to the European Institutions in Strasbourg.

**The conference and workshops, depending on seat availability in the meeting rooms, will be open to the press – Hotel Hilton, Sofia**

Link to the [programme](#) of the Conference

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