



## **27th CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN MINISTERS OF JUSTICE**

*Yerevan (12-13 October 2006)*

**VICTIMS:  
PLACE, RIGHTS AND ASSISTANCE**

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***Honourable ladies and gentlemen!***  
***Honourable Director General of the Council of Europe of***  
***Legal Affairs***

***Dear colleagues!***

It is my special honour and pleasure to address you at this eminent meeting with a special thanks for the organisation of this immensely successful Conference to the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Minister of Justice Mr. Davit Harutyunyan and the Council of Europe, at which extraordinarily significant issues are debated which relate to the rights, place and assistance to victims of crime.

In the course of yesterday's sessions many useful ideas and suggestions **with which I agree**, were underlined. Without further ado, I am going to address the following concrete question: Which actions does the Republic of Macedonia undertake on the legislative level and in the practical utilization of international law and in the national legislature in order to protect the victims of crime?

The Republic of Macedonia is as well faced with the question of protection of victims of crime and the trafficking against human beings, as a transit country and a country of destination.

Hence, with the aim to effectively resolve the above mentioned questions:

- The Republic of Macedonia signed the Convention of the Council of Europe for actions against trafficking in human beings and it is in the process of its ratification
- Several new criminal offenses regarding the field of trafficking were introduced in **the Criminal Code** stemming from international Conventions
- The amendments to the Law on Criminal Procedure introduced **a new chapter concerning protection of victims, witness protection, and protection of collaborators of justice**
- **The new Law on witness protection** was adopted in May
- The **transit centre** for protection of victims of trafficking in human beings, sexual exploitation and domestic violence, situated in Skopje, has been functioning successfully for the past several years in cooperation and support of the International Organisation for Migration – IOM.
- The existence of this **transit centre** has allowed for providing assistance to **approximately 600 victims** of which 61% are in the age between 18 and 24, 12% are in the age between 14 and 17 and 0,13% are children in the age below 14.

- Evidently, the Republic of Macedonia achieved positive results and experiences with the establishment of this transit centre because numerous victims which have been seriously maltreated and physically abused, which have no documents for identification, most of which are women – **find refuge and shelter in the transit center.**
- If the State cannot provide assistance to these victims in the mentioned manner, they could concomitantly **become victims of other criminal groups.**
- This question is furthermore of crucial significance because the victims are exposed to vast pressure and threats which accounts for their refusal to even testify.
- Therefore, due to the fact that the burden of proof of such criminal offenses became increasingly difficult, a solution to this problem was introduced such that **at present** the victims and witnesses which are from other countries **undergo hearings as persons with hidden identity through the utilization of audio and video conferences** and through other measures.
- In order to more effectively deal with the mentioned problems, in 2006, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a **Strategy for fight against trafficking in human beings and illegal migration with an Action Plan** for its implementation.

- With the aim of implementing the Strategy, a training of 40 judges, public prosecutors, lawyers and police officers was undertaken and completed.
- The Non-governmental sector is as well included in these activities through the organization of public campaigns on their part for protection of victims of domestic violence, sexual exploitation and directed towards encouraging the victims to report the perpetrators of such criminal offenses and to initiate a more proactive fight against this kind of crimes
- **A Unit for preventing and detection of violent crimes and fight against trafficking in human beings** was established in the **Ministry of Interior**, with staff that is well trained and equipped.
- The existence of such a Unit **has provided results** evident from the 2 cases in which two organized criminal groups have been detected and **a criminal procedure was initiated against a total of 49 persons** which include a group of people from Macedonia and two neighboring countries which managed to organize themselves quite well.
- In the course of this year, **sentences were delivered against 8 persons for maltreatment and sexual exploitation** which were sentenced with a **prison sentence of 4 to 8 years of duration.**

In short, these are few of the baseline measures and activities undertaken by the Republic of Macedonia in the direction of protection of victims of crime and the serious types of organized crime, in particular.

**In my opinion, the activities in the future period should be directed towards:**

1. Decreasing the number of victims through the strengthening of measures for prevention and through postulating prevention in the focus of our attention
2. Ensuring effective protection of victims of crime through organized forms and modalities within the framework of state institutions and NGOs as well as through raising public awareness
3. Upgrading of international norms, as it is currently quite successfully carried out by the Directorate General of the Council of Europe of Legal Affairs, and upgrading of national legislation
4. Improving the cooperation within the scope of international organizations and among countries as well as ensuring regional cooperation which is paramount for specific types of criminal offenses which are significantly present in a given region.

**Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen!**

**Dear colleagues!**

At the end, allow me to greet you once again and to salute the attempts undertaken by the Council of Europe – which have a substantial impact in the improvement of effectiveness of criminal legal systems and which serve as encouragement and obligation in the process of implementation of standards, methods and measures with the final goal of their harmonization.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**