

Practices of cooperation and coordination

Bulgaria

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Synergies in mechanisms for monitoring the rights of people with disabilities

In Bulgaria, the monitoring of the rights of persons with disabilities is implemented in a multi-layered and multifaceted structure based on horizontal relations and involving various actors. First, the Monitoring Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (MCRPD) (*Съвет за наблюдение за правата на хората с увреждания, СНПХУ*) is the major monitoring mechanism for the adherence to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the national scale. The monitoring council has a four-year mandate and is administered by the Ombudsman and the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) (*Комисия за защита от дискриминация, КЗД*), who share the presidency on a two-year rotation basis. The council consists of nine members – two representatives from the Ombudsman, Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) (*Комисия за защита от дискриминация, КЗД*), four representatives of the organisations of or for persons with disabilities and one representative of the academia appointed by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS) (*Българска академия на науките, БАН*).¹ Second, the government has established a National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) (*Национален съвет за хората с увреждания, НСХУ*) as advisory body comprised of members from relevant ministries, public bodies and agencies, and civil society organisations.² Third, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) (*Министерство на труда и социалната политика, МТСП*) is engaged with the coordination of the national monitoring mechanisms. It serves as the national focal point for matters relating to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.³

National structure for combatting trafficking in human beings and support to victims

In Bulgaria, the mechanism tackling trafficking in human beings presents a promising example of collaboration between different actors engaged with prevention and providing various support services to victims of human trafficking at the local, national and supranational level.

¹ Bulgaria, Persons with Disabilities Act ([Закон за хората с увреждания](#)), 18 December 2018, last amended on 25 January 2023.

² For more information, see the [integrated public administration information system](#).

³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2021), [Structures set up for the implementation and monitoring of the CRPD](#), 31 December 2021.

As a party to all major international agreements in the field, Bulgaria has, over the years, taken significant steps to develop a comprehensive legislative and institutional framework for combating trafficking in human beings. The national anti-trafficking and victims protection policy is regulated in the Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Act (*Закон за борба с трафика на хора*)⁴, adopted in 2003. The Act established the national coordination body – the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) (*Национална комисия за борба с трафика на хора, НКБТХ*)⁵ with the Council of Ministers. It is chaired by one of the Deputy Prime Ministers and comprises deputy ministers and deputy chairs of relevant state institutions.

The NCCTHB develops and monitors the National Programmes for Prevention and Counteraction of Trafficking in Human Beings and Protection of Victims and reports on the implementation of the relevant measures and actions⁶. The NCCTHB also coordinates the National mechanism for referral and support of victims of human trafficking – the NRM (*Национален механизъм за насочване и подпомагане на жертви на трафик на хора*)⁷, a framework for referral and support of victims of trafficking. Adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2016, the NRM outlines binding procedures for providing timely and adequate assistance to victims. It is an updated version of the original NRM developed in 2010 within a project led by Animus Association Foundation (фондация „Асоциация Анимус“) in cooperation with the NCCTHB. To ensure effective implementation of the NRM, a multi-agency and multidisciplinary team coordinated by the NCCTHB has been established to handle complex trafficking cases.

The Commission also oversees a system of seven specialised services for adult victims of trafficking: three shelters for temporary accommodation, one reintegration shelter, and three consultative centers providing protection and support, where victims can be accommodated together with their children.

At the local level, Local Commissions for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (LCCTHBs) have gradually been set up in ten municipalities. These commissions function under the methodological guidance of the administration of NCCTHB and

⁴ Bulgaria, Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Act (*Закон за борба с трафика на хора*), 20 May 2003, last amended on 15 October 2019.

⁵ NCCTHB website: <https://antitraffic.government.bg/>

⁶ NCCTHB: [Annual Programmes and Reports](#)

⁷ [National mechanism for referral and support of victims of human trafficking](#)

mirror the national structure: they are chaired by a Deputy Mayor and include representatives of the relevant regional authorities.

The NCCTHB also acts as Bulgaria's National Rapporteur or Equivalent Mechanism (NREM) within the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator's network. Additionally, it is a member of the Network of National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators from South-Eastern Europe (SEE), and serves as Bulgaria's contact point for the Transnational Referral Mechanism (TRM), developed by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in Vienna, as well as for reporting to relevant bodies of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE.

The NCCTHB and its Secretariat maintain strong, long-standing partnerships with national non-governmental organizations. These NGOs play a key role in managing the specialized services for victims, participating in the Permanent Working Group, and contributing to the implementation of the National Programmes and the NRM.

Other practices

CSOs establish a Bulgarian Hate Crime Recording Coalition

A recent example of a promising practice is the Bulgarian Hate Crime Recording Coalition (*Коалиция за активно докладване на инциденти, свързани с предразсъдъци*) led by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) (*Български хелзинкски комитет, БХК*) and including also the civil society organisations Organisation Drom (*Организация Дром*), Integro Association (*Асоциация Интегро*), Liberal Alternative for Roma Civil Unification (LARGO) (*Либерална алтернатива за ромско гражданско обединение, ЛАРГО*), Roma Academy for Culture and Education Association (*Ромска академия за култура и образование*), and the Youth LGBT Organisation Deystvie (*Младежка ЛГБТ организация Действие*). The coalition was officially established in 2023 under an EU-funded project that also created a public platform for hate crimes reporting.⁸ The coalition documents national data on hate crimes and reports to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The bodies

⁸ For more information, see the [website](#) of the project "Scaling up the Role of Civil Society of Vulnerable Communities in Bulgaria to Respond to Discrimination, Intolerance, Hate Speech and Hate Crimes" (EQUALTOGETHER).

responsible for collecting statistics on crime in Bulgaria are the Ministry of the Interior (Moi) (*Министерство на вътрешните работи, МВР*), the Supreme Prosecutor's Office of Cassation (SPOC) (*Върховна касационна прокуратура, ВКП*), the Supreme Court of Cassation (SCC) (*Върховен касационен съд, ВКС*), the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) (*Висш съдебен съвет, ВСС*) and the National Statistical Institute (NSI) (*Национален статистически институт, НСИ*). As long as the national authority responsible for providing hate crime data to the ODIHR is the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) (*Комисия за защита от дискриминация, КЗД*),⁹ the Bulgarian Hate Crime Recording Coalition operates as a civil society mechanism employing the principle of shadow reporting.

⁹ Bulgaria, Commission for Protection Against Discrimination (*Комисия за защита от дискриминацията*) (2017), 'On the International Day of Tolerance, the CPD participates in an OSCE forum on hate crimes' ([*'В международния ден на толерантността КЗД участва във форум на ОССЕ за престъпленията от омраза'*](#)), press release, 17 November 2017.