

Press Release

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Council of Europe puts forth specific measures to protect victims of human trafficking

Strasbourg, 13.04.2007 – On 19-20 April 2007, in Berlin, Germany, the Council of Europe is holding its seventh regional seminar to fight human trafficking – with a focus on the victims.

Organised with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the seminar, open to the press, will gather over 200 participants from 11 European countries to examine specific measures in the Council of Europe's landmark Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ([CETS No. 197](#)).

Once ratified by 10 states, the Convention stipulates actions that would not only punish traffickers but also protect victims – sometimes children – often forced into a life of prostitution or slave labour. Traumatized, without legal status and frequently lacking necessary language skills to escape their predicament, these people need urgent assistance.

Seminar participants will include police officers and victim assistance representatives, NGO representatives and Council of Europe and United Nations Anti-Trafficking Unit officials.

The Convention requires trained and qualified personnel to work with police, labour, customs, immigration authorities and embassies or consulates to more effectively identify and help victims.

Among other specific measures within the Convention:

- Child victims would be represented by a legal guardian, organisation or authority which is responsible to act in the best interests of that child, as the authorities take steps to establish his/her identity and nationality and make every effort to locate his/her family or guardians.
- Countries are obliged to provide victims with standards of living capable of ensuring their subsistence. The Convention mentions appropriate and secure accommodation and psychological and material assistance, including emergency medical treatment.
- Language aid and legal assistance is to be provided to victims when appropriate
- The Convention introduces a 30-day recovery and reflection period for illegally present victims to allow them to recover and escape the influence of traffickers and to decide whether they will cooperate with law-enforcement authorities in prosecution of traffickers.

So far, 36 States have signed the Convention, out of which six have also ratified (Albania, Austria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia). It is not easy to obtain exact figures, but UN estimates indicate that between 700,000 to 2 million women alone are illegally trafficked each year. The figure is higher when one adds other forms of trafficking, including illicit organ trafficking and children. The annual market in human trafficking is estimated at \$32US billion.

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 46 member states.

Other regional seminars – so far held in Bucharest, Riga, Rome, Oslo, Athens and Nicosia – have already examined how national policies can be adapted to meet the requirements of the Convention.

Further information on: <http://www.coe.int/trafficking>

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