

Organisations most likely to be the first ones to identify a presumed victim

- NGOs
- IOM Bulgaria
- The Administration of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) and Local Commissions for combating THB
- Police/Border Guard
- Social services

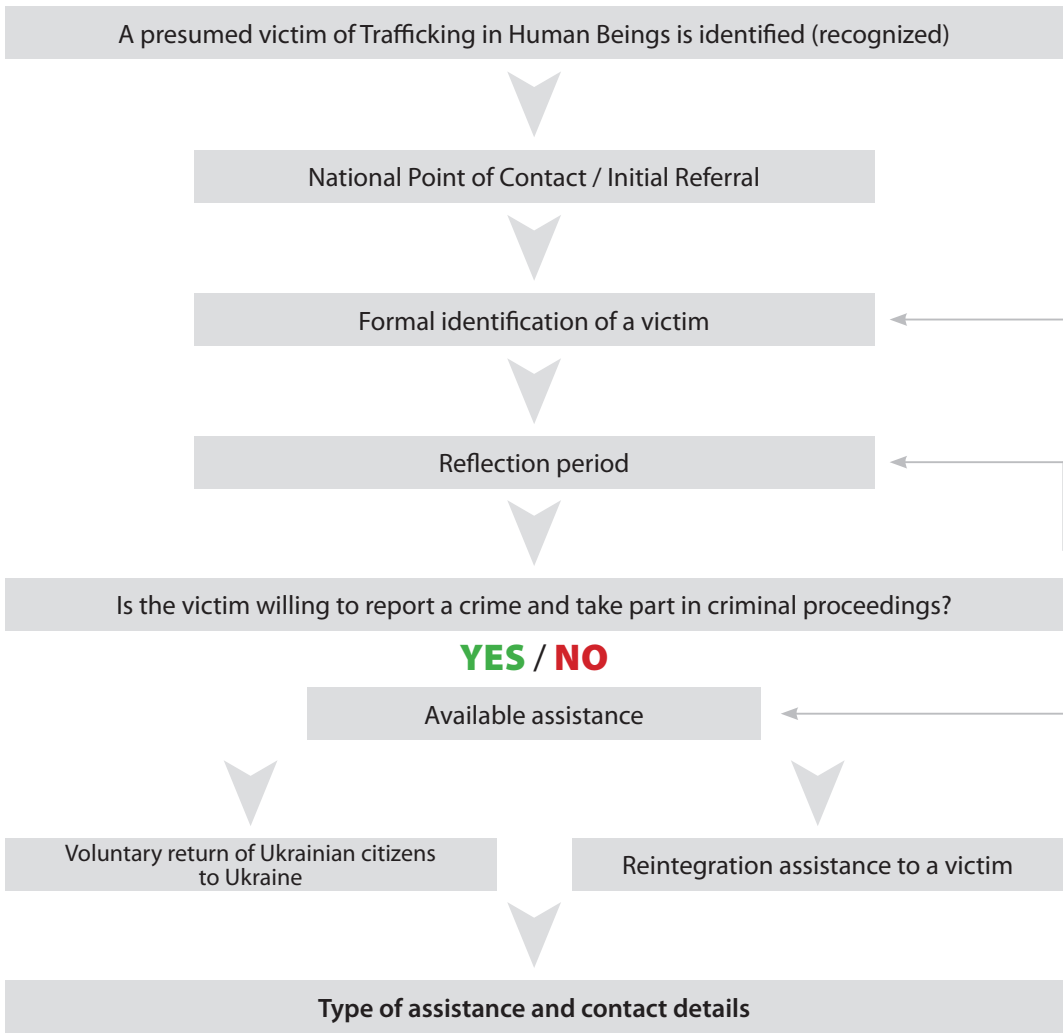
The National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) including its Administration is the Bulgarian National Point of Contact

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The NCCTHB has the Governmental assignment to function as the National Coordinator of the National Referral Mechanism and is responsible for coordinating assistance to victims of THB in Bulgaria. Measures included in this assignment, and according to the Law for combating THB, include monitoring of the implementation of the NRM, coordination of cooperation between state agencies and NGOs, development of the National Annual Programme for combating THB and support of victims, including initiatives with the purpose to counter THB and protect victims. As formulated in the Bulgarian legislation, the NCCTHB is also responsible for collecting and compiling national data on THB and functions as a national rapporteur on the issues of human trafficking.

The NCCTHB additionally has an operative role. It is responsible for establishing and funding the temporary placement shelters and centers for victims of THB, managed by NGOs after undergoing a public procurement procedure, including shelter for long-term reintegration.

Moreover, the commission has established 10 local networks for THB, local commissions for combating THB, within Bulgarian municipalities. The local structures comprise representatives from various local agencies, including NGOs. They identify and refer victims, their activities on local level, mainly focusing on prevention and capacity building of professionals are financed by the National Commission which also provides methodological support to the local structures.



Any state agency or NGO can detect a victim of THB in Bulgaria, or do a *first-level identification*: police, consular staff, service providers, NGOs, health care staff or international organizations. At this stage of the identification, the responsible stakeholder is expected to provide the victim with an emergency assistance, as formulated in the Bulgarian NRM, including information about the rights of the victims of THB, such as the period of recovery and reflection, specialized protection when agreeing to cooperate with investigation authorities and the right to compensation.

The formal identification is performed only by pre-trial authorities such as the investigative police and prosecution authorities. The legal threshold to initiate a preliminary investigation is rather low and requires that a competent state agency (Ministry of Interior and/or Prosecution Office) is notified about a suspected case of THB and a presumed victim is first-level identified. The person notifying the competent authority can be either the victim herself/himself or another stakeholder. Moreover, the formal identification differs from the first-level identification in the level of assessments carried out by responsible stakeholders. During the stage of a formal identification, assessments such as health assessments and risk assessments should have been already carried out.

Victims have the right to special protection and reflection period if the victim agrees to cooperate with investigative authorities (art. 26 of the Law).

Victims of human trafficking are entitled to assistance in Bulgaria, regardless of their willingness to cooperate with state agencies.

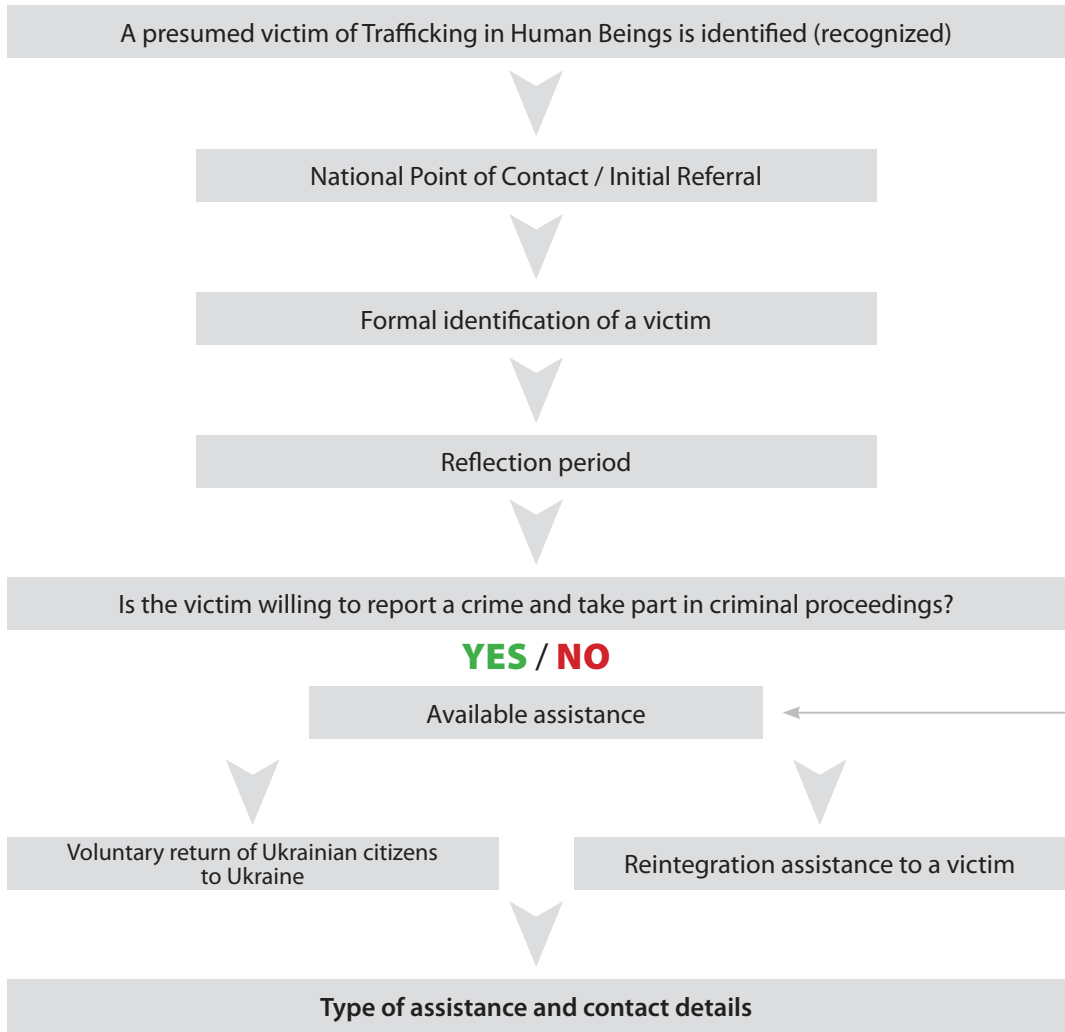
The different measures of assistance to victims of THB are formulated in the Anti-Trafficking Law, the NRM and the National Strategy for Combatting THB (2017-2021). Accordingly, victims are entitled to a shelter placement for 10 days automatically after identification. If the victim is cooperating in criminal proceedings, the duration at the shelter can be extended to 30 days. However, some NGOs providing long-term assistance can accommodate victims for up to six months.

Assistance provided by NGOs

Victims can be referred to shelters directly or through the system of the NRM.

The NCCTHB manages 5 functioning services in the cities of Varna and Burgas (two shelters for temporary accommodation, two counselling centres and one shelter for subsequent reintegration. The services can accommodate both women and men (minors and adults), victims of THB (formally and informally identified), regardless of their nationality, ethnicity and religion.

In September 2017, 3 more specialized services for victims of trafficking in human beings were opened: *Shelter and Center for Temporary Accommodation of Adults, Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings and the Crisis Center for Children and Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings.*



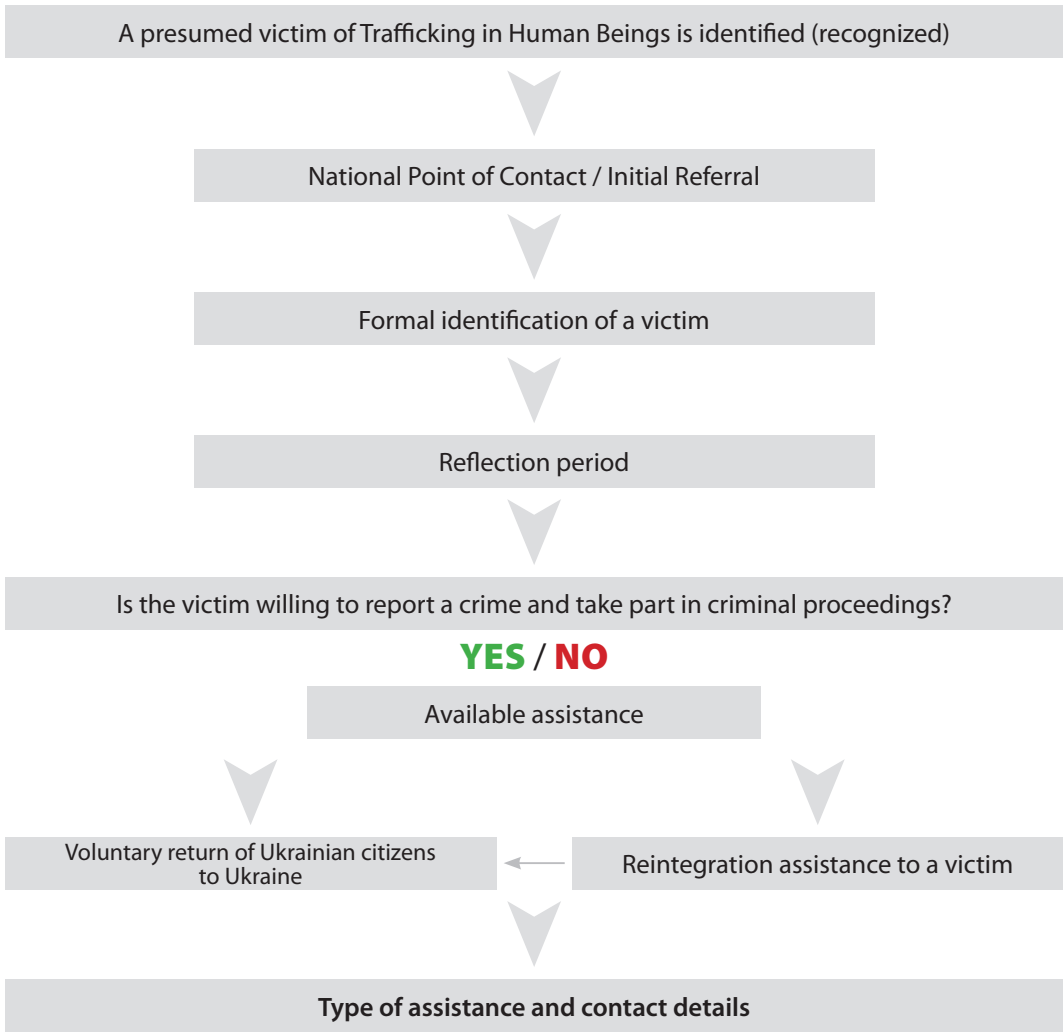
The three services are located on the territory of the capital Sofia and have a total capacity of 20 residents. At this point the shelter for adults in Sofia is closed and cannot accommodate residents. The Commission is looking for alternatives and financial support by the state to re-open it soon.

These 8 services are for this target group only and they are funded by the National Commission and managed by NGOs.

Moreover, there are other services available in Bulgaria that, although not tailored specifically for victims of THB, can be accessed by victims. Various forms of assistance can be offered by social services under the umbrella of the Agency for Social Assistance. These services are run by NGOs or directly by municipalities. Some of these services are called crisis centres which receive a wide range of victims subjected to different forms of violence, including THB. The staff at these centres have all undergone training in THB and are experienced in meeting victims of this crime.

Provided assistance:

- Accommodation
- Medical aid
- Legal aid
- Vocational training
- Psychological support
- Financial aid
- Education
- Long-term support for reintegration



It is common that Bulgarian victims of THB are returned to Bulgaria through a Voluntary Return Programs carried out by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In these instances, it is IOM who is responsible of finding a reliable and competent NGO tasked to assist the victim according to a tailored plan of assistance.

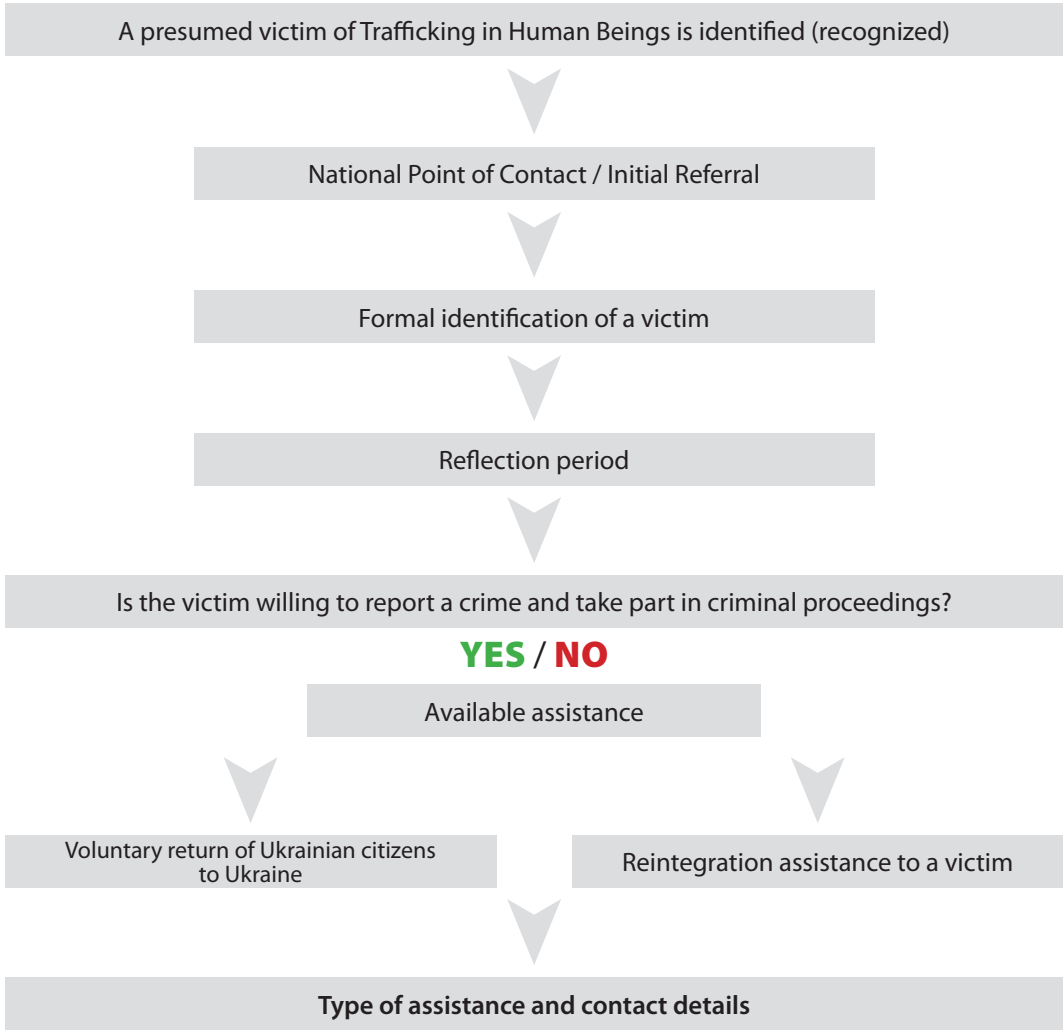
Please note:

- Avoid having the victim tell her/his story repeatedly to several different stakeholders in the country of destination and in the country of origin. The Bulgarian authorities note that it is difficult to convince the victim to cooperate, and once again share her/his testimony, if she/he has already told their story to several stakeholders. Make sure that Police and Prosecutors exchange the necessary information as much as possible instead of having the victim tell her/his story too many times.
- It is common that a victim does not fully comprehend her/his rights. Providing the victim with a lawyer in Bulgaria can therefore be a necessary step. A lawyer, representing the victim in contact with state agencies, NGOs and other organisations, will increase the chances of ensuring the rights of the victims.
- When returning a victim, through a voluntary return program or otherwise, take into consideration that most Bulgarian victims who have resided outside Bulgaria for a period of time do not automatically qualify for health insurance in their country of origin. If the victim has not made any payments to the State Health Fund, it means that they are entitled only to emergency healthcare. Make sure to offer the victim necessary medical examinations prior to return and include a budget for medical support after return for the necessary period of time.
- In a dialogue with the IOM office in Sofia, make sure to inform the competent stakeholders about the return of the victim if the victim consents. No personal data about the victim should in any instance be shared without the consent of the victim.

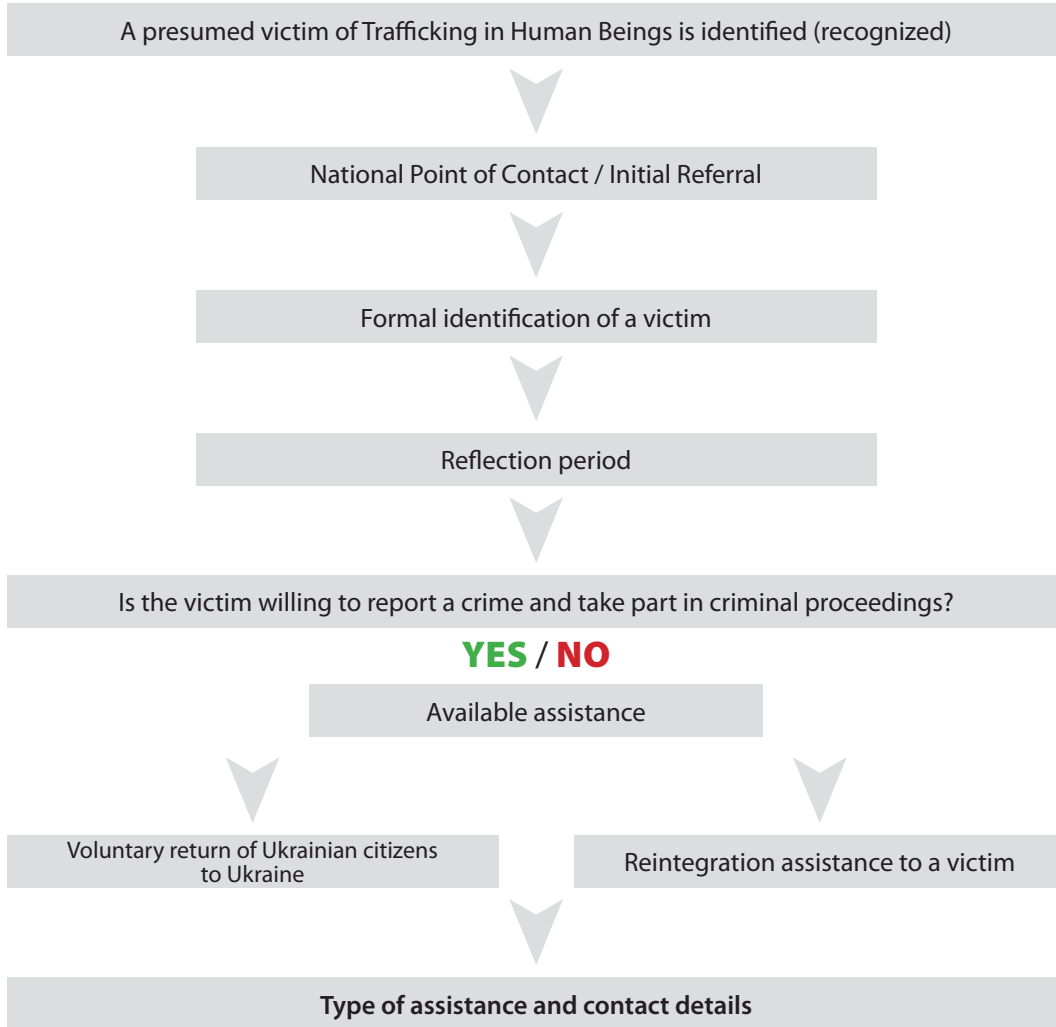
The NGO Animus Association offers victims of THB medium to long-term support, which includes legal counselling, psychosocial help, rehabilitation measures, accommodation and even help with finding a job or education. The plan of assistance is tailored in dialogue with the victim according to her/his needs.

The referral of a victim to the Animus Association can begin already when the victim is in the country of destination. From this point, practical details surrounding the support can be prepared in a dialogue with the victim. The victim can stay in one of the crisis centres run by the Animus Association up to 6 months. The ultimate goal of the NGO is to reintegrate the victim into the Bulgarian society.

Moreover, the NCCTHB may offer a victim the possibility to stay in a shelter for the longer term, including the period of the criminal proceeding which often lasts for more than one year. One of these services is managed by the Demetra Association and is the only of its kind, being a shelter specialized for long-term reintegration for victims of THB (only for victims of the THB crime).



Type of assistance	Institution/ organization	Contact details
National point of contact and coordinating body. Shelters for temporary accommodation and centres for support of victims of THB.	National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) and NCCTHB Administration (NCCTHBA)	Website: www.antitraffic.government.bg E-mail: office@antitraffic.government.bg Phone: (+359) 2 807 80 50
Voluntary Return, reintegration and monitoring for victims of trafficking.	IOM Bulgaria	Website: www.iom.bg E-mail: iomsotia@iom.int Phone: (+359) 2 939 47 74 Mobile Protection Teams Contacts: (+359) 884 602 185; (+359) 884 605 184; (+359) 892 212 194
Crisis centre for support and accommodation of victims of violence and human trafficking.	Animus Association	Website: www.animusassociation.org E-mail: animus@animumsassociation.org Phone: (+359) 2 983 52 05 24/7 Hotline: (+359) 2 981 76 86
Offering programs and consultation services – social, psychological, legal, education, and other services, especially for women victims of abuse.	Demetra Association	Website: www.demetra-bg.org E-mail: office@demetra.bg Phone: (+359) 56 81 56 18
Assistance for victims of THB, including shelter, food, medical, social and psychological support.	A21 Campaign	Website: www.a21.org E-mail: info@a21.bg Phone: (+359) 884 454 656



The organisation offers help and support for people victims of human trafficking or affected by it.	Nadja Centre Foundation	Website: www.centrenadja.com E-mail: CENTRENADJA@ABV.BG Phone: (+359) 2 981 93 00
Crisis shelters for temporary accommodation and support for victims of domestic abuse and trafficking.	SOS – Families at Risk Foundation	Website: www.sos-varna.org E-mail: sos@ssi.bg Phone: (+359) 52 609 677
Shelter for temporary accommodation. Psychological, legal and social support.	P.U.L.S Foundation	Website: www.pulsfoundation.org E-mail: pulse.women@gmail.com Phone: (+359) 76 60 1010
Crisis shelter and support for women and children victims of domestic abuse and violence.	Samaritans Association	Website: www.samaritans.bg E-mail: office@samaritans.bg Phone: (+359) 42 621 083