

STATEMENT

ENGLISH only

of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the UN, the OSCE and other International Organizations in Vienna**OSCE Permanent Council 1219****7 March 2019****In response to the report of ODIHR Director, Ingibjörg Gísladóttir**

The delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria fully aligns itself with the statement made by Romania on behalf of the European Union Member States. In addition, we would like to add a couple of points in national capacity.

Bulgaria joins others in warmly welcoming Director Gísladóttir at the Permanent Council and thanks her for presenting the ODIHR's report.

In 2018 Bulgaria was one of the participating states which were actively searching ODIHR's assistance. Therefore, our delegation is using this opportunity to express its most sincere gratitude to ODIHR and its able team in Warsaw and in Vienna for excellent cooperation in 2018 and particularly for the successful realization of the projects "Building a Comprehensive Criminal Justice Response to Hate Crime" and "Turning Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism".

Under the first project, several training courses for law enforcement personnel and prosecutors were carried out in Bulgaria and a joint training manual on hate crimes for police and prosecutors was developed. Within the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw, on 20 September 2018 Bulgaria together with the other three project countries, co-sponsored a side event and presented the joint training manual on hate crimes for police and prosecutors. In a related development representatives from the Prosecutor's Office, judiciary, national police and Commission for Protection from Discrimination attended the conference organized by ODIHR in Vienna in November 2018 and shared the Bulgarian experience resulting in a toolkit of practical guides and methodologies that can be used by public institutions and civil society in addressing hate crimes.

On 22 November 2018 ODIHR's Practical guide on "Understanding anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities", translated into Bulgarian and customized to the domestic context, was presented in Sofia. One of the highlights of this event was the signature of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Bulgarian Government, the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom" and the World Jewish Congress. The signing of MoUs is a primary example of a good practice cited in

ODIHR's Guide of ways in which governments can demonstrate their commitment to supporting Jewish communities by institutionalizing this resolve. The event brought together more than 30 government representatives, law-enforcement officials and Jewish community representatives, and included a panel discussion on "Antisemitism and Hate Crime in Bulgaria: Challenges, Opportunities, and Recommendations for the Future".

The positive dynamics in our cooperation motivated the Bulgarian authorities to seek further support from ODIHR in addressing the existing challenges. In 2018 the Bulgarian government has requested assistance from ODIHR to review the Bulgarian Criminal Code, primarily provisions pertaining to anti-discrimination, hate crime and hate speech and their compliance with international commitments and standards. Based on the ODIHR's recommendations, a set of draft amendments to the Criminal Code is under consideration.

Currently, Bulgaria is coordinating with ODIHR and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights a joint workshop on improving hate crime recording and data collection. All necessary steps have been undertaken to secure broad national representation and effective implementation of the follow-up measures after the workshop.

In conclusion, allow me to express once again our appreciation for the work that ODIHR is doing in assisting participating states to uphold their commitments.

Thank you for your attention!