Background:

Violence against children is still an everyday reality in the countries of South Eastern Europe, where social services and professionals who are the ones to first come in contact with children who have become victims of violence, are not necessarily properly identifying, reporting or referring cases. In order to increase the visibility of the issue of violence against children, UNICEF and EU launched a project in July 2011 that covers four countries in South Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey). This project works at three levels:

a) to reinforce the capacities of civil society partners in independent monitoring of child rights violations, in particular violence against children;

b) to reinforce partnerships between civil society organizations (CSOs) and State decision-makers and

c) with the ultimate aim of strengthening the system of public services to identify, monitor and address violence against children.

The project is embedded in reform agendas of existing child protection systems. The four participating countries are all in different stages of pre-accession to EU and the policy environment and reforms of services which are currently taking place in these countries are influenced by the larger European agendas. Therefore, as participating countries in this project, they will also be linked through regional activities with experience sharing initiatives at the wider European level.
The workshop “Strengthening child protection systems in their response to violence against children - turning evidence into policy and results” is a regional activity in the context of this project. It is the follow up to a research on how different service providers respond to violence against children which has been carried out in the four countries in the first year of implementation of the EU-UNICEF project. Combined with other evidence available at country level the study provides a baseline for strategic planning on how to shape up policy and systemic interventions with an aim of building coherent child protection systems able to respond to violence against children.

Relevance and timing of the workshop:

The primary consideration for the timing of this workshop is that all countries need to have finalized their research and have conducted validation meetings of the findings with governments. This will allow the workshop to be organized as a continuum to the study. The workshop represents a sense the tipping point of the EU project, the first phase focusing on knowledge-building and the second phase following the workshop focusing on advocating for and support to implementation of its recommendations at country level.

Objectives of the workshop:

The objectives of the workshop are to:

- Disseminate findings of the research with partners, allowing them to take stock of the different blocks required in their child protection system for allowing proper response for protecting children
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in responses to violence against children in the participating countries
- Make recommendations for policy changes to develop adequate services in order to build coherent child protection systems;
- Review opportunities, challenges and lessons learned for such policy reforms to happen in the changing policy environment of the participating countries.

Overall the workshop will make the case for better evidenced based planning and policy development in the area of violence against children and share lessons learned from an international level. At the end of the workshop there will be recommendations for countries on what changes are needed at the levels of policy, child protection system and services for coherent responses to violence against children. Hence, it is expected that by the end of the workshop, countries will have guidelines and/or draft strategy on policy implementation for better system response on violence against children.
Format:

The workshop will last 2 days, and will contain both key presentations (plenary) with engagement of expert speakers and working groups.

Participants:

Participants of the workshop are representatives of national governments representatives from the child protection field, national civil society organizations working on CP issues and formal independent monitoring mechanisms. The profile of participants is that they work at technical level, often in charge of compiling evidence for policy making in the area of child protection. The number of participants per country will be between 5 and 7 and from the RO (incl. experts) between 5 and 7. In total the number of participants should not exceed 40 people.

Time:

September 18-19, 2012

Venue:

The suggested venue for the workshop is Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina – one of 4 participating countries in VAC project and study (hotel Sarajevo).