

## **Contribution by Greece regarding the implementation of UN General Assembly Resolutions**

**1) 73/146 on "Trafficking in women and girls, 2) 73/148 on «Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment» and 3) 73/149 on «Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation».**

### **1. Resolution 73/146 "Trafficking in women and girls".**

Greece is a transit, destination and to a limited extent a country of origin (internal trafficking) for victims of human trafficking. As one of the main entry points for mixed migration flows reaching Europe, Greece is also stepping up efforts to address challenges relating to the nexus between human trafficking and smuggling of migrants and to the new opportunities created for traffickers and exploiters.

Greece has intensified efforts against THB through the introduction of three pivotal legal and political instruments: 1) the ratification of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol/the "Palermo Protocol" (2010), 2) the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2013) and 3) the transposition of the anti-trafficking EU Directive 2011/36/EC (2013) and the subsequent establishment of the Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings (O.N.R.), within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013). The O.N.R. was designated as the national co-ordination body.

The national policy endorses a comprehensive framework covering prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships with civil society and the private sector. Some of the most important deliverables concerning the fight against THB are the following:

-The development of a stringent legal framework regarding the criminalization of THB. The definition of human trafficking in Greek Penal Code (art. 323A) includes the following forms of exploitation: sexual exploitation, removing of cells, tissues or organs of a person, exploiting the labour or begging thereof, forcing into marriage<sup>1</sup>, *subjection of the victim to servitude, subjection of the victim to slavery or slavery-like practices, the commission of criminal acts by the victim*<sup>2</sup> and the recruitment of minors for use in armed conflicts. Perpetrators are punished by a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment and by a fine. In aggravating circumstances stricter punishment is stipulated. Stricter punishment are also provided for in case of persons who knowingly use the services of a trafficked person<sup>22</sup>.

The offence of human trafficking against a minor is separated from the use of the means (use of force, threat of violence or other forms of coercion, use of deceptive means or the exploitation of his or her vulnerable position) that constitute the offence<sup>2</sup>. The consent of the victim to the exploitation is considered irrelevant.

Moreover, the incitement of minors to begging with the view to exploiting their revenue is criminalized<sup>2</sup>.

- Appointment of Prosecutors on human trafficking at the Supreme Court and Courts of First Instance. Specialized anti-trafficking Units within the Police.

-National Action Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings

The Office of the National Rapporteur completed, in 2019, the drafting of the National Action Plan

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<sup>1</sup> Law 4531/2018, Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

<sup>2</sup> Law 4637/2019, Amendment of the Penal Code.

for the years 2019-2023. The objectives of the NAP are: the prosecution of perpetrators, the coordination and effective cooperation between national stakeholders and between national and international ones, the victim-centered, gender-sensitive and age-specific approach and the promotion of academic research.

The National Action Plan covers a wide range of policy-making projects that include inter alia measures to reduce vulnerabilities, trainings for more front-line professionals, targeted awareness-raising campaigns, assistance to and reintegration of victims, gender-informed policies, promotion of cooperation between national and international actors and enhanced action against organized crime.

- The official launch (1.1.2019) of the National Referral Mechanism (N.R.M.) for the identification and referral of victims of THB, which is coordinated and supervised by the O.N.R. and managed by the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA). A greater number of stakeholders from the public sector and civil society have been engaged in the fight against THB through the National Referral Mechanism. The overall target of this more inclusive and victim-centred identification platform has been pursued through a series of extensive trainings on THB indicators and victim protection SOPs offered to frontline professionals.

#### -National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020

The National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020, coordinated by the General Secretariat for Family Policy & Gender Equality (GSFPGE) considers trafficking in human beings as a form of gender-based violence, which exacerbates already existing structural inequalities and vulnerabilities. The measures prescribed therein refer to a) prevention of women and girls from being trafficked by empowering them and, subsequently, b) victims support through the national network of structures for the prevention and combating of gender-based violence, in cooperation with the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in human beings. In specific:

a) Empowerment of women and girls regards measures to enhance the skills of women in order to eradicate poverty and increase their participation in the labor market. It also regards the elimination of gender stereotypes, and information on gender issues through education and their involvement in a position of responsibility and decision-making. It is important to mention that the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020, has devoted a separate pillar to the balanced participation of women in all areas of public and professional life, with a view to their economic empowerment. The objectives as described in the National Action Plan are:

- i) Accelerating the equal participation of women in all areas of public and professional life, particularly in decision-making positions in parliament and in local/regional government.
- ii) Eliminate discrimination against women and ensuring gender equality in political and public life.
- iii) Policies for the balanced participation of women in elections.
- iv) Strengthening and developing the capacity and skills of women to actively participate in processes and decision-making and in leadership positions.

Strengthening, women's autonomy and improving their social, economic and political status are essential prerequisites for achieving sustainable development in all areas of life.

Economic empowerment of women always remains a key issue for policy action, and therefore it will constitute an important pillar of the next National Action Plan on Gender Equality that will be drafted for the next period.

b) Considering that Violence against Women is one of the most important sources of gender inequalities, we undertake action to support and empower women victims in order to take their lives back and be productive members of our society. Our efforts are presented in detail through the «National Programme on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women», which is the first comprehensive and coherent national action plan against gender based violence. The Program is described in details below. Its operation has been enriched with actions and cooperations during the COVID-19 pandemic (see below part 2: implementation of the Resolution 73/148).

The “National Programme on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women”, refers to all forms of gender based violence (e.g. domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, trafficking in women) and is part of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020 (NAPGE). Within this programme a network of 62 structures was established and operates for women victims of gender based violence, victims of trafficking included.

The network includes:

-the bilingual SOS telephone helpline 15900 and the e-mail address [sos15900@isotita.gr](mailto:sos15900@isotita.gr) (both in Greek and English), which operates 24 hours/day and 365 days/year. It is a low-cost helpline, nationwide, confidential and staffed by gender-trained counselors.

-42 Counseling Centers and 20 shelters all over Greece.

The services provided by the above mentioned structures are free of charge and include psychosocial support, legal counseling as well as counseling in labor issues, emergency shelter and, where necessary, legal aid in cooperation with local Bar Associations. In designing and delivering these services, due consideration is given to the need to respond to different social, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, faiths, states of health, etc. Our goal is to empower women victims of violence and help them to regain self-esteem, thus enabling them to make sound decisions for their future, and ultimately gain independence in their jobs and in their personal and family lives.

The tasks of the structures also include networking with local agencies and relevant associations for joint communication and public awareness programme.

- Training of professionals: A wide range of State agencies and welfare organizations are regularly trained on issues of human trafficking focusing on victims’ identification and protection. Officers of the Hellenic Police have participated in educational trainings including webinars regarding the Internet as enabler of human trafficking and in online courses on cyber-investigation for detection and identification of criminal activities on the Internet in the area of human trafficking.

- Raising general awareness to reduce ‘demand’ for services or products extracted from THB victims. This concerns primarily Human Rights’ Education in schools and synergies with civil society actors and the cultural sector.

In October 2019, Greece participated in the first EU-wide campaign on prevention of THB developed by the European Crime Prevention Network. The Office of National Rapporteur ensured and coordinated the participation of several public agencies and NGOs. The campaign, which included publishing posters and videos - informing on the national hotlines available for reporting cases of THB victims - on social media and internet pages, was launched on the occasion of EU Anti-trafficking Day.

The Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks organized an awareness-raising campaign which consisted of anti-THB awareness-raising messages appearing on Athens Metro screens and public buses for a month.

The parliamentary sub-Committee on fighting trafficking and exploitation of human beings convenes regular meetings that are broadcasted on national TV, thus giving audience the opportunity to get informed about the phenomenon. Among the issues presented and discussed in these meetings with the participation of representatives of national agencies, NGOs and international organizations were: trafficking of minors and national legislation on fighting THB and support to the victims,

The General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) implemented from April 2018 until June 2019 a national public awareness campaign, which included seminars, , a thematic conference, informational material in several languages (Greek, English, French, Albanian), TV and radio spots, cultural events, publicity on public transport, an updated webpage ([www.womensos.gr](http://www.womensos.gr)), a facebook page as well as banners in web pages. Its goal was to raise awareness and promote a zero-tolerance attitude towards VAWG, including trafficking and promote the specialized network of structures, the SOS Helpline, the Counseling Centers and the Shelters. Labor counseling is also provided and the target group comprises apart from women victims of gender based violence, also women victims of multiple discrimination (refugees, single parents, Roma etc.). Moreover, The GSFPGE, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and a leading maternity hospital in Athens, organizes seminars in schools to provide fundamental human rights and sexual and reproductive health education. In 2018, seminars were implemented in 21 schools and were attended by 2.538 students.

The Ministry of Education collaborates with the Office of the National Rapporteur and the Council of Europe in a project which seeks to promote the principles and guidelines of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture of the Council of Europe. The first phase of the project involved a training of 130 teachers of the secondary education in a two-day seminar (January 2020). Furthermore, the Minister of Education introduced several new teaching subjects in the school curriculum including sexual and reproductive health education and human rights education. The O.N.R. collaborates with the Institute on Educational Policy to train teachers on THB-related issues, including discouraging demand among boys and empowering girls to protect themselves from commercial sexual exploitation.

#### -Promotion of transnational cooperation

The Greek National Rapporteur and representatives of competent state agencies met with their Albanian counterparts and discussed the possibility of updating an existing agreement between the two countries on the protection of minor victims of trafficking in human beings (June and November 2019).

#### -Protection of vulnerable populations

A program titled "No child alone" has been launched in 2019 under the Prime Minister's auspices, aiming to support and protect unaccompanied minors among refugees and migrants living in Greece. A new Special Secretariat for unaccompanied minors was established under the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, dedicated to the protection and integration of the approximately 5.000 unaccompanied minors living in Greece.

New legislation on Guardianship (Law 4554/2018), provides for designated guardians for unaccompanied minors. The training of guardians includes practical tools to protect children from THB victimization. The same Law addresses the issue of registration of newborn babies, children of undocumented mothers, in order to decrease their risk of being trafficked.

Law 4538/18 governing adoptions adds important tools for child protection. More concretely, it foresees a centralized electronic register being created for all children available for adoption as well as for all prospective parents who have been screened for suitability by the competent state social services and have completed successfully a training program on parental role. A court decision

declaring the adoption is also required. The new law aims to considerably reduce the time needed to place a child with adoptive parents, while, at the same time, it makes the process more transparent, preventing minors' trafficking or facilitating the identification of such cases.

Law 4636/2019 provides that: - the immigration authorities are obliged to report on victims of THB to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) whenever they come into contact with victims, --the specific situation of vulnerable persons such as victims of trafficking in human beings is taken into account when applying the provisions on refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, - victims of human trafficking, being a vulnerable group, are provided with specialized care and protection during the reception and identification procedures, -applications of minors who are victims of trafficking in human beings, torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence are always dealt with following the regular procedures.

Moreover, at the Reception and Identification Centers (RICs- Hotspots) specific procedures for women and children are followed by front-line professionals. The newly arrived women get information about their rights according to the national law, as well as information on the actions and the referral pathways in case they are faced with any form of violence or harassment, including THB. They can contact the appointed focal points-employees for gender-based violence or any form of sexual violence at the RICs. The administration contacts the psycho-social support unit and the police when and if necessary.

#### The impact of Covid19 on Human Trafficking

Acknowledging that the lockdown had a profound impact on protection services and reduced the ability of competent state and civil society actors to respond with the appropriate human and financial resources, the O.N.R. took into account statements from UNODC, CoE, OSCE, and communicated a report to the competent authorities. As a result the ONR subsequently co-organized a parliamentary session with the competent Parliamentary Committee on human trafficking. During this session the O.N.R. and the N.R.M. Presented ongoing efforts to mobilize available recourses amid the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic with a view to alleviate the vulnerability of potential victims that could have been affected by the lockdown. The ONR highlighted possible areas of attention and intervention such as taking health protection measures in settlements of undeclared agricultural workers, addressing the increase of demand for pornography which may be associated with online exploitation, detection of possible cases where victims are confined at the same apartment with their exploiters, analyzing cases of domestic violence to assess possible cases of human trafficking victims.

Moreover the Police Anti-trafficking division has reported certain instances of investigation related to victimization of sex workers and online grooming of children.