

TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND GIRLS

Measures to address trafficking in women and girls, as per resolution 73/146, including on the increased efforts to ensure prosecution of traffickers and improve protection of victims

It should be underlined, that in 2015-2019, there was the largest number of pre-trial investigations in Lithuania against human trafficking for the purpose of non-sexual exploitation. In 2018, there was a trend towards decreasing sexual exploitation, and exploitation for the purpose of labour. During the period between 2017 and 2019, Lithuania further remained the country with the largest number of males as victim to human trafficking. Considering this fact, Lithuania pays significant attention to the fight against all forms of human trafficking.

Also, it is important to mention that during the period between 2017 and 2019, educational (prevention) and social security sectors, as well as non-governmental organisations (assistance to victims), made considerable efforts in the sphere of the fight against sexual exploitation. For example, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania informs students about the threats, forms related to human trafficking and the ways of protecting themselves: it created a documentary film for students with the methodological assistance to the teachers. The Ministry prepared and disseminated a newsletter about trafficking in human beings and measures of the fight against this offence, recommendations to schools on work with pupils of different ages and their parents “*Experience of Organising Prevention of Human Trafficking at School*”, the programme of prevention of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children “*Protect and Respect Me*”. The Ministry also organised training for the adult community at schools in which the participants were taught about threats of different forms of violence, human trafficking and exploitation. Furthermore, themes of the prevention of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are included in the curriculum of human safety of primary, basic and secondary education.

In 2020, the **National Counter-Human Trafficking Association** which united 5 non-governmental organisations in Lithuania was established. The Association coordinates the activity of the members of the Association, solves problems related to human trafficking, ensures access and quality of complex assistance to the victims of human trafficking all over the country, preventively promotes public awareness, ensures more effective victim protection services.

In 2017-2019 nine joint investigation teams of Lithuanian and foreign law enforcement institutions were set up to strengthen cooperation (the police, the border security and the public prosecutor’s office). Lithuanian officials took part in joint European operations and also raised their professional qualification in international training or seminars. The results of these international cooperation measures are as follows: joint pre-trial investigations, part of them ended in an indictment, exchange of good practice, shorter deadlines for pre-trial investigations, professional development.

In 2018 the study “*Suspended Pre-trial Investigations into Human Trafficking: Analysis of Causes, Problems and Possible Ways of Solution*” was conducted on behalf of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. In 2013-2018, the quality of human trafficking pre-trial investigations substantially improved; the greatest improvement in the quality of pre-trial investigations took place in pre-trial-investigations carried out since 2017.

It should be mentioned, that new Action Plan 2020–2022 on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings is currently drafted. Measures and actions of the Action Plan will be as follows: prevention,

prosecution (including training of officials), protection of victims and cross-sectoral and international cooperation.

The Republic of Lithuania is implementing measures related to the fight against trafficking in human beings in accordance with the Inter-institutional Action Plan Implementing the Programme for the Development of Public Safety (2015-2025) and the Action Plan for the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings (2017-2019). It should be noted that both Action Plans include the following activities: the training of specialists, public education and prevention, assistance to victims, and cross-sectoral cooperation. The implementation of both plans and activities is subject to quarterly assessments conducted by the Commission for the Coordination of the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings, the National Reporter on the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings, and the Committee on Human Rights of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, which also provide suggestions regarding the improvement of said plans and activities.

Lithuania also regularly implements preventive campaigns against trafficking in human beings. Relevant institutions have published over 30,000 preventive booklets entitled “*Tai nėra tai, ką tau siūlo Kęstas*” (“*This is not what Kęstas is Offering You*”). They provide user-friendly information about the dangers of trafficking in human beings and how to recognise it, as well as contacts in case of the need for assistance. The aforesaid booklets were transferred to municipal administrations, the Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau, and NGOs for further distribution within target groups. The booklets were also distributed to passengers by officers of the State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania at the security checkpoints of the Vilnius Airport.

In addition, the police had implemented different annual measures related to the fight against trafficking in human beings specified in the Action Plan Implementing the Programme for the Development of Public Safety, the Action Plan for the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings and the Inter-institutional Action Plan Implementing the National Crime Prevention and Control Programme. The Police Department of the Republic of Lithuania also contributes to the various initiatives of the institutions and agencies of the European Union, as well as other international organisations, and takes part in bilateral and multilateral meetings organised to discuss the fight against trafficking in human beings. The Police Department’s actively participates in the projects of the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (hereinafter referred to as “EMPACT”). For the purposes of implementing the projects related to the EMPACT, Lithuania organises and conducts annual international operations designed to identify persons affected by trafficking in human beings, victims of forced labour.

Since 2018, the coordination of activities related to the fight against trafficking in human beings is performed by the Chancellor of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. In 2018 the composition of the Commission for the Coordination of the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings (which was established in 2016) was changed. The aforesaid changes facilitate the coordination of issues related to the fight against trafficking in human beings, the more expedient amendment of legislation and the coordination of mutual positions. Moreover, the Commission now also contains representatives of the Vilnius Office of the International Organisation for Migration, and the British Lithuanian Society.

In 2016-2017 the implementation of the pilot project STROM II strengthened the role and capacities of municipalities in the fight against trafficking in human beings in the Baltic Sea Region. The implementation of the project in Lithuania was coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. Project participants: municipalities of the Kaunas City and the

District of Tauragė. Implemented measures were the following: information campaigns against trafficking in human beings, trainings for municipal employees, community education, and targeted preventive measures for groups at risk of victimisation by trafficking in human beings. The project also included the development of a sample description of the coordination of the fight against trafficking in human beings performed by municipalities, which was implemented in the municipalities of Kaunas City and the District of Tauragė, and later proposed to other municipalities.

The following activities and measures established in the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings Action Plan for 2017–2019 were implemented in 10 municipalities of the Republic of Lithuania: formation of a group for the coordination of the fight against trafficking in human beings, organisation of measures for raising public awareness of trafficking in human beings, as well as trainings in the identification of the victims and providing assistance.

In order to prevent trafficking in human beings, Lithuanian police officers arrange meetings with parish parsons, eldership representatives, school social workers and social workers employed by crisis centres. Municipal schools organise discussions, competitions, and seminars on the topic of trafficking in human beings.

Implementing the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings Actions Plan for 2017-2019, also trainings for law enforcement and court employees, prosecutors, municipal employees, ambassadors and labour inspectors were organised. In 2018 qualification trainings were provided to more than 600 officers and different types of specialists. The most common courses included in the trainings were concerned with the identification of victims of trafficking in human beings and the provision of assistance, prevention, criminal investigation and case law. During the mentioned trainings the different types of trafficking in human beings were discussed simultaneously.

Moreover, it should also be noted that officers of the Police Department of the Republic of Lithuania are provided with annual trainings on the topics related to the fight against trafficking in human beings. In 2018, trainings were organised on 7 and 21 of November and they were attended by 30 officers. In addition, Lithuanian police officers take part in annual qualification trainings organised by the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) and other institutions on the topic of the fight against trafficking in human beings.

In the Republic of Lithuania, persons using prostitution services are subject to administrative liability. Pursuant to 487Article of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Lithuania, liability is imposed on persons using prostitution services for consideration. The use of prostitution services for consideration incurs a fine of 90 to 140 euro. Furthermore, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as “CC”) establishes criminal liability for offences related to prostitution and pornography of other persons, e.g., gaining profit from another person’s prostitution (307Article of the CC), involving another person in prostitution (Article 308 of the CC), as well as trafficking in human beings (147Article of the CC) and purchasing or selling a child (157 Article of the CC). In summary, any and all coercive actions performed for the purposes of involving another person in prostitution or gaining profit there from are punishable pursuant to the norms established in the CC.

In 2018 Provisions for the Organisation of Selection Procedures for Projects Designed to Provide Assistance to Persons Affected, or potentially affected, by Trafficking in Human Beings, approved by the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, allowed to extend the funding of projects, selected in 2016, which have duly implemented their designated activities,

namely – the provision of social assistance to persons affected, or potentially affected, by trafficking in human beings. Project funding was extended for the following non-governmental organisations: the Missing Persons' Families Support Centre, SE Klaipėda Social and Psychological Services Centre, the Men's Crisis Centre, Caritas Lithuania, and the Vilnius Archdiocese Caritas.

In 2018, the provision of assistance to persons affected, or potentially affected, by trafficking in human beings was allocated 165,000 euro in funds from the state budget. All of the NGOs have collectively provided complex assistance to 244 persons in total (as compared to 219 persons in 2017): 128 men (as compared to 103 men in 2017), 111 women (as compared to 78 women in 2017), and 5 children (as compared to 38 children in 2017). Out of the 239 persons provided with social assistance: 139 were deemed affected by trafficking in human beings (identified by law enforcement authorities following pre-trial investigation), 69 were deemed victims of trafficking in human beings (identified by non-governmental organisations), and 36 were deemed potentially affected by trafficking in human beings (risk of victimisation by trafficking in human beings undetermined). In 2018, slightly more than half of the persons assisted by NGOs were deemed affected by trafficking in human beings during pre-trial investigation (58.2 per cent) (in 2017 such persons comprised 52.2 per cent, and 51 per cent in 2016), a smaller proportion thereof were deemed potentially affected (identified by NGOs) (28.9 per cent), and the rest were deemed of undetermined risk of victimisation by trafficking in human beings (12.9 per cent). It should be noted that most of the assistance (88.9 per cent) was provided to foreigners identified by NGOs as potentially affected by trafficking in human beings, with the remaining part (11.1 per cent) of foreign persons being subject to an undetermined level of risk of victimisation by trafficking in human beings. Moreover, most of the persons deemed affected by trafficking in human beings during criminal proceedings were victimised by trafficking in human beings at the international level (75.9 per cent) (as compared to 64.5 per cent in 2017).

Impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in regards to trafficking in women and girls, and measures undertaken to address those in the short, medium and long-term, particularly in the following areas:

Impact on risks for trafficking in women and girls

According to unofficial police data, numbers of unemployed Lithuanian migrants who have worked illegally and do not receive state support is increasing. After the resumption of flights (in the end of the quarantine), some of these persons will return to Lithuania. Some percentage of these persons expected to be victims of human trafficking or to become potential victims of human trafficking caused by unemployment.

In May 2020, considering problems listed above, meeting of the National Fight against Human Trafficking Coordination Commission will be organized to discuss issues of human trafficking. Accordingly, preventative measures to fight against human trafficking will be adopted.

Adaptation of service delivery to victims and survivors

Lithuanian law enforcement is aware of obligation to identify victims of trafficking and to adopt measures, taking into account their safety and protection needs despite COVID-19 and takes all possible measure to ensure fight against human trafficking. As well as Lithuanian NGO's, despite COVID-19 related issues, continue to provide access to safe accommodation, specialized facilities and other necessary assistance to the victims of human trafficking in accordance with quarantine rules.