

**Report of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings**

**for 2021**

# Ljubljana, April 2022

### CONTENTS

[Introduction .................................................................................................................................…….……….. 3](#_bookmark0)

[1 Legislation and policies.....................................................................................................…..………... 4](#_bookmark1)

* 1. [Amendments to legislation 4](#_bookmark2)
	2. [Implementation of activities in accordance with adopted national and international obligations 4](#_bookmark3)

[2 Prevention.......................................................................................................................... ………...6](#_bookmark4)

* 1. [Raising awareness among the wider public 6](#_bookmark5)
		1. [EU and World Anti-Trafficking Day 6](#_bookmark6)

[2.1.4 Other activities 7](#_bookmark7)

* 1. [Raising awareness among high-risk target groups 7](#_bookmark8)
		1. [Raising awareness among children and adolescents 7](#_bookmark9)
		2. [Preventive action in the field of raising awareness and prevention of human trafficking in the Roma](#_bookmark10) [community …………………………………………………………………………………...8](#_bookmark10)

[2.3 Raising the awareness and training of the expert public 9](#_bookmark11)

[3 Detection, investigation and prosecution of criminal offences related to human trafficking ........……….11](#_bookmark12) [3.1 Police activities 11](#_bookmark13)

* + 1. [Trafficking in human beings pursuant to Article 113 of the Criminal Code 11](#_bookmark14)
		2. [Other criminal offences 13](#_bookmark15)
	1. [Activities of the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office and district state prosecutors' offices 15](#_bookmark16)
		1. [Criminal offence of trafficking in human beings (Article 113 of the KZ-1) 15](#_bookmark17)
		2. [Criminal offence of exploitation through prostitution (Article 175 of the KZ-1) 19](#_bookmark18)
		3. [Findings of the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia 20](#_bookmark19)
	2. [Activities of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia 2](#_bookmark20)1
	3. [Activities of the Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia 2](#_bookmark21)3

[4 Assistance and protection of victims of human trafficking................................................. …..……….24](#_bookmark22)

* 1. ["Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Crisis Accommodation" programme 2](#_bookmark23)4
	2. ["Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Accommodation in a Safe Place" programme 2](#_bookmark24)4
	3. ["Reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings" programme 2](#_bookmark25)5
	4. ["Informing victims of trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence in the procedures of](#_bookmark26) [recognition of international protection (PATS)" project 2](#_bookmark26)5
	5. ["Support to persons in prostitution and those leaving it" project 2](#_bookmark27)6

[5 International activities and partnerships .........................................................................……..……….2](#_bookmark28)7

* 1. [International activities 2](#_bookmark29)7
		1. [The national coordinator for combatting trafficking in human beings and SPCTHB 2](#_bookmark30)7
		2. [Police 28](#_bookmark31)
		3. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MZZ) 29](#_bookmark32)
		4. [Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia (IRSD) 29](#_bookmark33)
		5. [Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia (FURS) 29](#_bookmark34)
	2. [Partnerships and research 29](#_bookmark35)

[Conclusion............................................................................................................................................….……….31](#_bookmark36)

# Introduction

In 2021, the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for combatting trafficking in human beings (hereinafter referred to as: IWG THB or inter-ministerial working group), which has been operating since 2003 and is managed by the national anti-trafficking coordinator (hereinafter: national coordinator) implemented the tasks within the framework of its competence and activities as laid down in the Action Plan for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the 2021–2022 Period. The national coordinator was provided with professional support in her work by the Service for Preventing and Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings at the Ministry of the Interior (hereinafter: SPCTHB).

The report on the work of the IWG THB for 2021 summarises the activities carried out in the field of preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings in five sections. The first section describes the changes in the field of legislation and the activities relating to the adopted national and international obligations. In the following, the report discusses the activities for preventing human trafficking, which include various forms of awareness raising of the broader public and high-risk groups of potential trafficking victims, and the training of the expert public whose work is related to the relevant topic. The section on detection, investigation and prosecution of criminal offences covers the report on the work of the police and prosecutor’s offices, which play a crucial role in this field. As, in a broader sense, the issue of trafficking in human beings is intertwined with the issue of labour exploitation and employment and undeclared work, this section also presents the activities of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: IRSD) and the Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: FURS). The fourth section contains information on assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings and their care, and the last section describes the international activities of the IWG THB in the year of reporting and partnerships at the national level.

# 1 Legislation and policies

## Amendments to legislation

The National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia passed on 3 March 2021 the Act Amending the Residence Registration Act (hereinafter referred to as: ZPPreb-1A), which was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 36/2021) on 12 March 2021. In Article 19, which regulates the determination of legal residence, a new fifth paragraph was added at the proposal of the IWG THB. It stipulates that in the procedure of establishing temporary residence, the administrative unit determines the legal residence of a foreigner who has a temporary residence permit, a certificate of registration of residence or a long-term visa and is a victim of domestic violence or trafficking in human beings, if, pursuant to the provisions of this Act, it is unable to register a permanent or temporary residence, at the address of the social work centre in the area where he/she has or had last registered temporary residence or the social work centre that submitted the proposal or consent for registration. This legal residence has the nature of a temporary residence. The option of registering a legal residence only on the basis of the consent of the social work centre will enable faster decision-making in the registration procedure, as in this case no additional proof will be required. ZPPreb-1A came into force on 27 June 2021.

On 30 March 2021, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Act Amending the Foreigners Act (hereinafter referred to as: ZTuj-2F), which was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. [57/21.](http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?sop=2021-01-1153) The amendment to Paragraph 1 of Article 50 introduces new grounds on the basis of which the police may authorise a victim of trafficking in human beings (and a victim of domestic violence) to stay for a period of 90 days due to the existence of personal circumstances justifying the victim's stay in the Republic of Slovenia. This is a transposition of the provisions of the Istanbul Convention and Paragraph 1 of Article 14 of the Convention of the Council of Europe on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. In addition, a victim of trafficking in human beings (and a victim of domestic violence) may also obtain a temporary residence permit on the basis of the existence of personal circumstances justifying the victim's residence in the Republic of Slovenia. A permit issued in the event of personal circumstances will be issued to the beneficiary for the duration of these circumstances, but not longer than one year, with the option of extension for up to one year.

In order to strengthen cooperation with the countries of origin of victims of trafficking in human beings, in 2021 the Ministry of the Interior initiated the conclusion of four implementing protocols with individual countries of South-Eastern Europe on cooperation in the fight against trafficking in human beings and child abuse. The protocols cover areas related to the prevention of trafficking in human beings, the identification, referral, protection and voluntary return of victims of trafficking in human beings, and the protection of children who are victims of all forms of abuse. A cooperation protocol with the Republic of Montenegro was signed on 3 December 2021 and with the Republic of North Macedonia on 18 March 2022.

## Implementation of activities in accordance with adopted national and international obligations

The Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (IWG THB) met three times in 2021, and a more restricted Working Group meeting was convened twice to address themes in the area of forced labour. The IWG THB discussed topical issues relating to the fight against human trafficking and adopted suitable measures for more effective implementation of policies in this field. It also prepared the Action Plan for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the period 2021-2022, which was approved by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on 4 March 2021, and the annual report on the work of the IWG THB for 2020, which was presented to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia in June 2021.

The work of the IWG THB was also distinguished by numerous activities in the field of coordination of specific cases of placement of victims of trafficking, which are discussed and decided by a specially appointed multidisciplinary group in accordance with the Manual on Identification, Assistance and Protection of Victims of Trafficking.

In June 2021, Slovenia entered the third round of the assessment on the implementation of the Convention of the Council of Europe on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings prepared responses to a comprehensive Council of Europe questionnaire, and these were presented to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on 11 November 2021.

Within the framework of other international mechanisms pertaining to Slovenia’s reporting about trafficking in human beings, the SPCTHB prepared various contributions in 2021 on the basis of requests from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime *(*UNODC*),* the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)) and the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. It also contributed to the report of the International Labour Organisation on the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour and, in cooperation with the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office, the Police and the Ministry of the Interior, prepared responses to the Council of Europe's comprehensive questionnaire on the use of the internet and other modern technologies in trafficking in human beings.

The SPCTHB also worked with the European Migration Network (EMN) Focal Point in Slovenia to prepare a study on the identification and protection of victims of trafficking in human beings. For the European Commission, it coordinated with the relevant institutions on statistics for 2019 and 2020 and prepared a substantive contribution to the 4th EU Progress Report on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings. In line with the harmonised practice, in 2021 it also participated in the preparation of the Annual Report on Trafficking in Human Beings of the United States Department of State, which again included the Republic of Slovenia in the group of countries that fully comply with the minimum standards in the combat against trafficking in human beings (the so-called TIER 1).

# Prevention

Also in 2021, the work of the IWG THB in implementing prevention activities was severely affected by the epidemic of the infectious disease Covid-19 (hereafter referred to as: the Covid-19 epidemic). Training of professionals dealing with trafficking in human beings in their work was implemented on a much smaller scale than in the past. In November 2021, the SPCTHB launched systematic awareness-raising activities for children and minors in primary and secondary schools, and other established activities to raise awareness and prevent trafficking in human beings continued, including in the Roma community.

## Raising awareness among the wider public

### EU and World Anti-Trafficking Day

In the framework of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in cooperation with the Network of National Coordinators for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings of South-Eastern Europe (hereafter referred to as: NATC SEE), an information campaign focused on the issue of impunity for perpetrators of trafficking in human beings was carried out on the occasion of European Anti-Trafficking Day on 18 October 2021. For this purpose, NATC SEE representatives adopted a joint statement to strengthen measures to end impunity for trafficking in human beings and published information messages on their social media profiles, aimed at the general and professional public as well as at potential victims.

On 18 October 2021, a press release was published on the Government's website, which was also shared on the websites of other institutions participating in the IWG THB. The Government Communication Office updated the infographics with statistical data on trafficking in human beings in Slovenia in the 2010–2020 period and sent it to the media together with a press release.

On the occasion of the World Anti-Trafficking Day, on 30 July 2021, Caritas Slovenia sent a press release to various media, which some summarised on their information channels.

### Website

Also in 2021, UKOM provided content updates on the main website gov.si in Slovenian [https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/boj-proti-trgovini-z-](https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/boj-proti-trgovini-z-ljudmi/) [ljudmi](https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/boj-proti-trgovini-z-ljudmi/)[/http://www.vlada.si/boj\_proti\_trgovini\_z\_ljudmi/](http://www.vlada.si/boj_proti_trgovini_z_ljudmi/) and English. The content of the website was updated on several different tabs with current data for the current year.

### Media

According to the available data, Slovenian print, electronic and online media published over 15 articles related to trafficking in human beings. In particular, the media paid most attention to the activities of detection and prosecution of criminal offences of trafficking in human beings. Some media reported on the European Anti-Trafficking Day, summarising the communication of the IWG THB and citing statements by the national coordinator and non-governmental and humanitarian organisations. The topic was also addressed in the context of the pandemic, drawing attention to the migration of abuses to the internet and the increased vulnerability of victims, especially children.

In 2021, the Association Ključ recorded 8 appearances related to trafficking in human beings and 10 related to the promotion of the House of Fears project.

### Other activities

The Association Ključ participated in the implementation of the House of Fears project, which was open from 25 to 31 October 2021. The aim of the organisers of the House of Fears was to evoke empathy in visitors through experiential learning, and at the same time raise their awareness and inform them about key organisations that offer assistance to people who have experienced various forms of violence, including trafficking in human beings. After the tour, visitors also had the opportunity to talk to experts and practitioners in the field. In seven days, the House of Fears was visited

by 250 people, and a short press conference was held to mark the opening. The media reported positively on the House of Fears (Dnevnik, Večer, RTVSLO, A Kanal, Radio Slovenia, STA and the electronic media).

In 2021, within the framework of the co-financing contract for the project Care for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings

* Crisis Accommodation, the Slovenian Caritas provided pupils and school counsellors with preventive material warning young people about the dangers and pitfalls of trafficking in human beings. It also provided material to participants in other events at which awareness was raised regarding the issue of trafficking in human beings, although such events were scarce due to the measures taken to prevent the consequences of Covid-19.

## Raising awareness among high-risk target groups

###  Raising awareness among children and adolescents

* **Activities of the SPCTHB**

In accordance with the Action Plan for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2022, in November 2021, the SPCTHB started the implementation of workshops to systematically raise awareness among children and adolescents about the dangers of trafficking in human beings, its manifestations, appropriate action and self-protective behaviour.

The three-year work plan, divided by region, foresees the implementation of workshops in primary schools in the Podravje, Pomurje, Savinja and Koroška regions and in secondary schools in the Notranjska, South-Eastern, Posavje and Obalno-Kraška regions in the 2021/2022 school year. By the end of 2021, a total of 27 workshops had been held, 13 in primary schools and 14 in secondary schools. A total of 479 pupils attended the lectures. After the workshop, pupils also completed a survey containing 5 questions related to their knowledge of the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings, the sufficiency of the information obtained and their satisfaction with the workshop.

 Primary schools

In 2021, workshops were held in primary schools in the Koroška and Savinja regions. The target group was 9th grade pupils. Six workshops were held in the Koroška region (Prežihov Voranc Primary School in Ravne na Koroškem, Neznani talci Primary School in Dravograd) and seven in the Savinja region (Primary School I in Žalec, Primary School in Dobje, Primary School in Kozje and Primary School in Vitanje). 205 pupils attended the workshops, 107 female and 91 male, while 7 pupils did not specify their gender.

The analysis of the primary school surveys shows that the awareness-raising objective was achieved, as almost all pupils gained new information from the workshop (94%) that would enable them to identify the phenomenon (71%). The majority of pupils liked or very much liked the workshops (96%).

 Secondary schools

In 2021, workshops were held in secondary schools in the Obalno-Kraška, Notranjska, South-Eastern and Posavje regions. The target group was second year secondary school students. 6 workshops were held in the Obalno-Kraška region (Koper Grammar School and Antonio Sema Piran Grammar School) and 8 workshops were held in the Notranjska region (Postojna School Centre and Ilirska Bistrica Grammar School). The workshops were attended by 274 pupils, 124 female and 150 male.

The analysis of the surveys shows that the awareness-raising objective in secondary schools was achieved, as almost all students gained new information from the workshop (97%), and most of them would be able to identify the phenomenon (62%). All students liked or very much liked the workshop (100%).

### Other activities

Within the contract on co-financing the project Care for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Crisis Accommodation in 2021, Caritas Slovenia conducted 7 live prevention workshops, which were attended by 151 pupils and students from the Osrednjeslovenska statistical region. The workshops were aimed at raising awareness of children, young people and staff working with them, as well as other target populations, about the dangers and pitfalls of trafficking in human beings, identifying indicators of trafficking in human beings and acquainting them with self-protection or preventive measures.

The Association Ključ held 112 events for raising awareness among youth (pupils and students), which were attended by 2604 people. They held a sports and information event, the Ključno na spletu workshops, the Ključna šola workshops, the Telesnica workshops and afternoons in the Quarter Town Centres.

###  Preventive action in the field of raising awareness and preventing trafficking in human beings in the Roma community

The Government Office for National Minorities (hereinafter referred to as: GONM) manages an ad hoc working group to draft a protocol in procedures for handling cases of civil partnership with minors - handling of cases of escapes of minors to harmful environments (child marriages) and forced marriages in the Roma community. Based on the decision of the working group, in 2020 the GONM, in cooperation with representatives of relevant institutions and organisations, prepared a draft handbook that was discussed and approved by the ad hoc working group at its meeting on 18 December 2020.

In July 2021, the GONM issued the Handbook on Recognition and Action in Early and Forced Marriages in the Roma Community in the framework of the National Platform for Roma project. The Handbook was developed in cooperation with the representatives of relevant ministries, the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office, the police, the Community of Social Work Centres of Slovenia, representatives of NGOs and the Council of the Roma Community of the Republic of Slovenia, who have contributed significantly to its content. It contains information gathered in one place; specifically general facts and experience that briefly and clearly present the issue and the legislation, existing action procedures, specific cases of procedures being addressed in practice, contact details of the most experienced non-governmental organisations working in areas related to this issue, and which institutions, other organisations and individuals can be contacted for help or cooperation. The handbook was published digitally on the website of the Office and 500 copies were printed. The Office communicated the publication of the Handbook to all relevant public and competent institutions in July 2021. In digital form, the manual was sent to all members of the Inter-ministerial Working Group for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings, Roma organisations and representatives of the Roma community, Social Work Centres and directly to employees of Social Work Centres who in their work encounter members of the Roma community or the topics addressed in the Handbook, the public prosecutor's office, the courts, multi-purpose Roma centres, NGOs, primary schools and health institutions in areas where the Roma community lives, municipalities where Roma live and all three associations of municipalities, as well as other individuals who have attended events organised by the Office on the subject. A printed copy of the Handbook was also sent to all those who expressed an interest.

On 7 September 2021, the sixth meeting of the ad hoc Working Group on Early and Forced Marriage in the Roma Community took place. The purpose of the meeting was to agree on the implementation of professional training and consultations in the environments where the problems addressed by the Handbook are perceived to be an issue. It was stressed at the meeting that the training should be held in person and be organised in such a way that representatives of all relevant institutions from each environment (e.g. representatives of the Social Work Centre, prosecutor's office, health institutions, police, schools) attend them at the same time. It was also agreed that the training would take place in the environments where the problem is most acute and that, as a result, more training would be provided in a smaller, local format, with a focus on inter-institutional cooperation and participation. The participants also exchanged information regarding their areas of work and current experiences with cases of early and forced marriages in the Roma community. Given the highlighted need to organise live training and considering the constraints brought by the prevention of the spread of Covid-19 infections, the activities related to the implementation of the training were postponed to 2022.

The GONM also participated in several events in 2021 to gain insight into the situation in specific environments where members of the Roma community live, including in the areas of early and forced marriages. These included events organised by the operators of the multi-purpose Roma centres and events organised by the Office in the framework of the National Platform for Roma project, in which, while not directly addressing the issue, participants often presented their own experiences of the issue or presented specific cases. They also participated in the event entitled "The situation of the Roma in Slovenia: support work with the Roma families (in Maribor)", organised by the Kralji ulice association. At these events, the Office informed the participants about the Handbook on Recognition and Action in Early and Forced Marriages in the Roma Community, as well as about the planned activities, and obtained information and contacts for planning further activities.

## Raising the awareness and training of the expert public

The Criminal Police Directorate at the General Police Directorate (hereinafter referred to as: GPU UKP) constantly educates and trains criminal investigators and police officers at the local level. Within this education and training, attention is dedicated to recognising various forms of human trafficking, indicators to detect potential victims and offenders, and the understanding of special further procedures when dealing with victims and implementing investigations in pre-trial proceedings. In 2021, criminal police training was not carried out due to the Covid-19 epidemic.

The GPU UKP, in cooperation with the SPCTHB and the Ključ Association, conducted four training sessions for police officers in the field of combatting trafficking in human beings in September 2021 (9, 16, 23 and 30 September 2021). The purpose of the training was to raise awareness of police officers regarding the issue of trafficking in human beings, to identify indicators of trafficking in human beings and to familiarise them with the procedures when identifying victims. The training also introduced the police officers to the importance of cooperation between the police and civil society in the implementation of procedures with victims of trafficking in human beings and assistance and protection programmes. The training was attended by 85 police officers from all Police Directorates.

On 3 and 4 June 2021, the GPU UKP, in cooperation with the Uniformed Police Directorate, Border Police Sector, conducted training of police officers and shift leaders at border crossing points via a videoconference. The purpose of the training was to raise awareness of police officers regarding the issue of trafficking in human beings, to familiarise them with the indicators of trafficking in human beings and the procedures for identifying victims of trafficking. The training was attended by 39 police officers from all Police Directorates.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereinafter referred to as: MZZ) conducts regular forms of training of employees posted to diplomatic missions and consulates and regularly provides them with information on the potential dangers of trafficking in human beings. In May 2021, a lecture for one group of consular officers was organised by the SPCTHB and attended by 6 MZZ staff. No consular consultation was organised in 2021 due to the pandemic; therefore, the issue of trafficking in human beings was not addressed in this context.

On 9 December 2021, within the framework of the Programme for the Implementation of the Public Powers of the Social Chamber of Slovenia for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021, financed by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (hereinafter referred to as: MDDSZ), the Social Chamber of Slovenia held a continuing training course for professionals and expert assistants in working with victims of trafficking in human beings. The introductory part of the seminar reinforced the knowledge already acquired on trafficking in human beings, followed by a presentation of the Public Prosecutor's Office and its role in criminal proceedings. The specifics of prosecuting the crime of trafficking in human beings were presented, with an emphasis on the protection of witnesses in criminal proceedings. In the second part of the seminar, the participants focused on the victim's perspective: the structure of the experience, preparation for testifying, re-coping with traumatic events, fear of meeting the accused, secondary victimisation within the pre-trial/criminal proceedings and the role of professionals. The seminar was attended by 42 professionals or expert assistants.

 In 2021, the Association Ključ conducted 20 training sessions for the professional public, which were attended by 404 people.

In August, Caritas Slovenia held a training session for volunteers entitled Psychiatric Medications and their Action, which presented the most common psychiatric diagnoses, the use of psychiatric medications and their side effects. Its aim was to provide useful guidelines and to educate staff involved in the integrated care of victims of trafficking.

# Detection, investigation and prosecution of criminal offences related to human trafficking

The section on detection, investigation and prosecution of criminal offences mainly covers the activities of the police and prosecution service, including measurable results, i.e. the number of offenders dealt with, injured parties, charges and final convictions. This section also includes the activities of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia and the Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia as, when supervising the implementation of sectoral legislation in their competence, the content of operations is intertwined and linked in the broader context with the problem of labour exploitation, undeclared employment and work and the exploitation of migrant workers.

## Police activities

In the fight against trafficking in human beings, the trend of recent years continues, with Slovenia remaining a target country for victims of trafficking, who are most often exploited for prostitution and sexual abuse. To a lesser extent, the presence of other forms of exploitation of victims, manifested in the exploitation of forced labour and forced criminal offences, is noted. Slovenia is also a transit country for persons from South-Eastern Europe who continue their journey through Slovenia to other EU Member States. Slovenia is not a country of origin of victims of trafficking exploited in other EU countries or third countries.

The perception of issues related to the exploitation of victims of trafficking in human beings and the abuse of prostitution depends primarily on proactive police activities aimed at detecting these crimes and identifying victims. Reports of these crimes by victims or the public are very rare.

In the area of trafficking in human beings and abuse of prostitution, there has been an increase in the number of occurrences of these crimes, which the police believe is due to exploitation of the vulnerability of the victims. It is established that the perpetrators, through the abuse of a subordinate and dependent position and through deception, achieve domination over the victim before handing them over to exploitation. Thus, the perpetrators do not use physical violence against the victims and do not restrict their movement but use methods of economic coercion or the financial dependence of their victims. In most cases, victims do not identify themselves as victims of trafficking in human beings or abuse of prostitution in police proceedings.

###  Trafficking in human beings according to Article 113 of the KZ-1

In 2021, the police addressed 42 criminal offences of trafficking in human beings as per Article 113 of the KZ-1, which, compared to the previous year, indicates an increase in the number of criminal offences addressed. In this context, the police dealt with 40 victims and 18 perpetrators of trafficking in human beings.

It also addressed three cases in which there were reasons for suspicion that a criminal offence of trafficking in human beings had been committed, but for which there was no basis on which to file criminal complaints. In this respect, the police submitted reports to the competent prosecutor's offices pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Article 148 of the Criminal Procedure Act.

*Table 1: Number of offences of trafficking in human beings addressed in 2017–2021*

| **TYPE OF CRIMINAL OFFENCE** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Trafficking in human beings (criminal) | 67 | 71 | 12 | 29 | 42 |
| Trafficking in human beings (reports) | 12 | 6 | 14 | 8 | 3 |

1 When providing statistical data, individual persons are mentioned, which means that a person (suspect, victim) is counted only once in the investigation, regardless of the number of criminal offences for which they were processed.

### Suspects and victims in criminal offences of trafficking in human beings (Article 113 of the KZ-1)

In 2021, the police addressed 40 victims of trafficking in human beings, 39 women and 1 man. All victims were exploited for prostitution and sexual abuse, with a predominance of Dominican Republic nationals (18).

*Table 2: Number of established victims of trafficking in human beings in 2021 by gender, citizenship and age*

| **GENDER** | **CITIZENSHIP** | **AGE GROUP** | **2021** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Male | Slovenia | 18-24 | 1 |
| FemaleFemale | The Dominican Republic | 24-34 | 7 |
| Female | The Dominican Republic | 34-44 | 10 |
| Female | The Dominican Republic | 44-54 | 1 |
| Female | Croatia | 24-34 | 2 |
| Female | Colombia | 34-44 | 1 |
| Female | Paraguay | 18-24 | 1 |
| Female | Paraguay | 24-34 | 1 |
| Female | Romania | 18-24 | 2 |
| Female | Romania | 24-34 | 2 |
| Female | Slovenia | 24-34 | 1 |
| Female | Slovenia | 44-54 | 1 |
| Female | Serbia | 18-24 | 2 |
| Female | Serbia | 24-34 | 4 |
| Female | Serbia | 34-44 | 1 |
| Female | Ukraine | 24-34 | 1 |
| Female | Ukraine | 34-44 | 1 |
| Female | Venezuela | 34-44 | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | / | / | **40** |

*Table 3: Number of established victims of trafficking in human beings in 2021 by gender and form of exploitation*

| **FORM OF EXPLOITATION** | **MEN** | **WOMEN** | **TOTAL** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sexual exploitation | 1 | 39 | **40** |
| **TOTAL** | **1** | **39** | **40** |

*Table 4: Number of suspects processed in 2021 by gender, nationality and age for the offence of trafficking in human beings*

| **GENDER** | **CITIZENSHIP** | **AGE GROUP** | **2021** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NATURAL PERSONS |  |  | 18 |
| Male | Slovenia | 24-34 | 3 |
|  Male |  Slovenia | 34-44 | 6 |
|  Male |  Slovenia | 44-54 | 3 |
|  Male |  Slovenia | 54-64 | 1 |
|  Male | Serbia | 24-34 | 1 |
|  Male | Ukraine | 24-34 | 1 |
| Female | The Dominican Republic | 24-34 | 1 |
|  Female |  The Dominican Republic | 34-44 | 1 |
|  Female | Romania | 24-34 | 1 |

| LEGAL ENTITIES | 2 |
| --- | --- |
| **TOTAL** | **20** |

### Other criminal offences

As the problem of human trafficking is frequently closely linked with some other criminal offences, the police also deal with the criminal offences of prostitution and violation of fundamental workers’ rights in connection with trafficking in human beings.

### Exploitation through prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1

In 2021, the police addressed 19 offences of exploitation through prostitution, which shows an increase in the number of offences addressed compared to 2020. It also addressed seven cases in which there were reasons for suspicion that a criminal offence of exploitation through prostitution had been committed, but for which there was no basis on which to file criminal complaints. In this regard, suitable reports were submitted to the competent prosecutor’s offices based on Paragraph 10

of Article 148 of the Criminal Procedure Act.

*Table 5: Number of offences of trafficking in human beings addressed in 2017–2021*

| **TYPE OF CRIMINAL OFFENCE** | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Exploitation through prostitution (criminal offences) | 10 | 24 | 6 | 1 | 19 |
| Exploitation through prostitution (reports) | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 7 |

### Suspects and victims in the criminal offence of exploitation through prostitution

A total of six people, three men and three women, were dealt with by the police on suspicion of having committed the offence of exploitation through prostitution.

*Table 6: Number of suspects processed in 2021 by gender, nationality and age for the offence of exploitation through prostitution*

| **GENDER** | **CITIZENSHIP** | **AGE GROUP** | **2021** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Male | Slovenia | 34-44 | 2 |
|  Male |  Slovenia | 54-64 | 1 |
| Female | Moldova | 18-24 | 1 |
|  Female |  Moldova | 24-34 | 1 |
|  Female | Slovenia | 18-24 | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | / | / | **6** |

In the reporting year, the police addressed 20 victims of criminal offence of exploitation through prostitution. All of the victims were female adults, with a predominance of Slovenian and Ukrainian nationals.

*Table 7: Number of established victims of exploitation through prostitution in 2021 by gender, citizenship and age*

| **GENDER**  | **CITIZENSHIP** | **AGE GROUP** | **2021** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  Female | Moldova | 24-34 | 1 |
|  Female |  Moldova | 34-44 | 1 |
|  Female | Slovenia | 16-18 | 2 |
|  Female |  Slovenia | 18-24 | 1 |
|  Female |  Slovenia | 24-34 | 4 |
|  Female |  Slovenia | 34-44 | 2 |
|  Female | Serbia | 34-44 | 1 |
|  Female | Ukraine | 18-24 | 3 |
|  Female |  Ukraine | 24-34 | 2 |
|  Female |  Ukraine | 34-44 | 3 |
| **TOTAL** | / | / | **20** |

When monitoring the issue of prostitution in Slovenia, a similar trend has been established as in previous years; specifically, that it is carried out indoors, especially in rented or privately owned apartments and hotel rooms. Almost no street prostitution or outdoor prostitution has been detected.

When monitoring the issue of prostitution, the police also note the continuation of the trend from previous years of the advertising of prostitution in the print and internet media. This is done by publishing photographs of prostitutes, the place where they conduct their activities, contact numbers and prices of sexual services. Prostitution is carried out in apartments, hotel rooms, erotic massage salons, etc. In addition, there are forums on the websites where users comment on services, prostitutes, nightclubs and related matters.

### Violation of fundamental workers’ rights under Article 196 of the KZ-1

In 2021, the police addressed 1,357 criminal offences of violation of fundamental rights of employees as per Article 196 of the KZ-1, in which elements of labour exploitation of injured parties were established. No elements of forced labour as a form of exploiting victims of trafficking in human beings were determined in pre-trial proceedings, and these elements were also not found in further criminal proceedings.

*Table 8: The number of criminal offences related to the violation of the fundamental rights of employees in the period 2017–2021*

| **TYPE OF CRIMINAL OFFENSE** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Violation of fundamental rights of employees | 1,338 | 1,519 | 2,420 | 1,968 | 1,357 |

*Table 9: Number of suspects and victims of the criminal offence of violation of the fundamental rights of employees*

|  | **SUSPECTS** | **VICTIMS** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| NATURAL PERSONS | 235 | 1,318 |
| Male | 184 | 1,058 |
| Female | 51 | 260 |
| LEGAL ENTITIES | 135 | 2 |
| **TOTAL** | **370** | **1,320** |

Regarding forced begging as one of the forms of forced labour, the trend from previous years continues, typical of which is that these persons refuse to cooperate in police procedures and do not recognise themselves as victims of human trafficking.

## The Specialised State Prosecutor's Office and district state prosecutors' offices

SDT RS, which is exclusively competent to prosecute criminal offences related to human trafficking, actively performed its function in 2021 in the field of criminal offences of trafficking in human beings as per Article 113 of the KZ-1, criminal offences of enslavement as per Article 112 of the KZ-1 and criminal offences of exploitation through prostitution as per Article 175 of the KZ-1.

### Criminal offence of trafficking in human beings (Article 113 of the KZ-1)2

The following was received and addressed by the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia in the reporting period:

* 3 indictments due to criminal offences of trafficking in human beings as per Article 113 of KZ-1, namely against 12 natural persons and 2 legal entities and to the detriment of 40 victims (all were females).

The lower incidence than in previous years reflects the fact that almost the entire reporting year was marked by the infectious disease Covid-19, as life was restricted by a number of measures during the declared epidemic. These measures had an impact on judicial, administrative and other public law cases or proceedings, as well as on the work of law enforcement authorities.

Regarding the adoption of state prosecutor's decisions, the state prosecutors of the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia in the reporting year:

* issued 1 rejection order for a criminal offence as per Article 113 of the KZ1, specifically against 2 natural persons;
* filed one request for investigation regarding the criminal offence as per Article 113 of the KZ-1, specifically against 5 natural persons to the detriment of 38 victims.

The District State Prosecutor's Office in Celje also addressed individual cases in the area of trafficking in human beings, specifically:

* in the reporting year, 1 request for investigation was filed for the offence of trafficking in human beings under Paragraphs 2 and 1 of Article 113 of the KZ-1, against 1 natural person and to the detriment of 8 victims (female);
* addressed a case for which a request for investigation was submitted in 2020 for the offence of trafficking in human beings under Article 113 of the KZ-1 and the offence of exploitation through prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1, against 4 natural persons and 1 legal entity, to the detriment of 28 victims (female). The court has not yet ruled on the request;

it has addressed the case of trafficking in human beings under Article 113 of the KZ-1 and the offence of exploitation through prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1, which is at the main hearing stage, against 8 natural persons and 1 legal entity and to the detriment of 13 victims (female), in which two suspects have confessed to the offence of trafficking in human beings under Article 113 of the KZ-1. In this case, an extension of the indictment for the criminal offence of exploitation through prostitution was requested as per Article 175 of the KZ-1, but the court has not yet made a decision.

The cases related to trafficking in human beings are usually larger cases, initiated against several people operating in a criminal group, and in almost all cases covert investigation measures had to be used for investigation and detection. Due to the foregoing, proceedings before court take more time. This particularly refers to the main hearing, which may last for several years.

### Court decisions

During the reporting year, no cases were closed at first instance courts, but there were still court decisions that changed case law in the broader area of combatting trafficking in human beings. In recent years, courts have more often given acquittals, whereas they had previously given convictions on essentially the same facts. In the past, convictions have also been confirmed in individual cases by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia. In order to improve the situation, in 2021 the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia proposed to include a representative of judges in the IWG THB and to provide more active training for judges in this area.

The 2020 report of the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia already points out that the case law in this area has in recent years tilted in favour of the accused and has moved significantly away from the victims. In one case, the Court justified its decision on the grounds that any form of participation in the prostitution of another person from which the perpetrator benefits financially does not constitute criminal exploitation through prostitution, and that only participation in the prostitution of another person is punishable where the mutual benefits and benefits of the two persons involved are so clearly disproportionate that the person being prostituted is thereby restricted in their personal and economic freedom.

2 Individual cases in the same reporting period were dealt with in various phases, i.e. from the receipt of the criminal complaint or the report to be amended as per paragraph ten of Article 148 of the Criminal Procedure Act to the adoption of the state prosecutor’s decision, i.e., from filing the request for investigation, filing an indictment and to the issue of a decision dismissing the indictment, or only in a certain section. Given the above, the same case is often reported under the item of receiving a criminal complaint or report as per paragraph ten of Article 148 of the Criminal Procedure Act, under the item of dismissal, filing of a request for investigation and filing the indictment.

On the other hand, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia has already adopted two important decisions in this area in 2020 (Judgement No. I Ips 54529/2010, 23 April 2020, and Judgement No. I Ips 58554/2012, 17 December 2020). In the first judgement, the Court clearly explained that the consent of the victim does not exclude the offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1, which is already apparent from the very description of the offence, which explicitly states that the offence is committed irrespective of the (aggrieved) person's possible consent. In another judgement, however, the Supreme Court held that exploitation through prostitution is not permissible and that it is also necessary to prevent other persons from exploiting prostitution in countries where prostitution is otherwise legalised and legally regulated. In the opinion of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia the earnings of prostitutes are not essential for the assessment of the legal definition of exploitation, but what is decisive is whether the persons who participated in prostitution benefited from it.

Also in 2021, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia took important positions in the highlighted area that should have an impact on the case law of the lower courts. In one case, the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia received a request for the protection of legality. The petition was followed, as the request for the protection of legality was also filed with the Supreme Court on 25 March 2021.

In its judgement No I Ips 22460/2015 of 28 January 2021, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia stated, inter alia, that the regulation of the offence of trafficking in human beings in Article 113 of the KZ-1 differs from the regulation in Directive 2011/36 on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/Justice 2002/PNZ (hereinafter referred to as: the Directive) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (hereinafter referred to as: the Protocol). The provisions of the KZ-1 are stricter, as some of the offences covered by the basic definition of trafficking in human beings in the Directive and the Protocol constitute a so-called qualified form of the offence in the KZ-1, which covers cases in which the offence is committed in a particularly reprehensible manner (by means of force, threat, persuasion, abduction, or abuse of a position of subordination or dependence). This means that the perpetrator fulfils the statutory elements of the offence under Paragraph 1 of Article 113 of the KZ-1, even if they do not use force, threat, deception, abduction or similar means. The same applies to the consent of the victim, who, unlike in the Directive or the Protocol, does not exclude the existence of an offence under Paragraph 1 of Article 113 of the KZ-1, which is already apparent from the very description of the offence, which explicitly states that the offence is committed regardless of the (aggrieved) person's possible consent. Such an explicit legal provision reflects the fact that victims of trafficking in human beings often "voluntarily" choose to participate in trafficking due to their difficult socio-economic situation, which they are forced to do due to existential disadvantages, which makes it difficult to talk about true voluntariness. However, in the Protocol or the Directive, the victim's consent is not taken into account only if the act is committed in a particularly reprehensible manner, i.e. by force, threat, deception, abduction or abuse of a position of subordination or dependence. The statutory elements of the offence of trafficking in human beings are also fulfilled if the victims have consented. Therefore, the defence submissions on the relevance of consent to the existence of the offence, as well as the submissions that the victims did not feel exploited, are irrelevant. The Supreme Court also stated in its judgement that in the present case there was a systematic and organised trafficking of the victims, ranging from their recruitment, their "ordering" and "supply" for payment, to their taking over of and accommodation in an apartment, while some of them were subject to the surveillance described above, whereby all described actions were directed towards the ultimate goal of the exploitation through prostitution for pecuniary gain.

Two decisions of the higher courts should also not be overlooked. In its judgement No IV Kp 53301/2011 of 10 June 2021, the Koper High Court pointed out that it is not (only) the persons’ earnings that are essential for the assessment of the statutory element of exploitation, and that the essence of the offence of exploitation through prostitution is that the perpetrators benefit from the prostitution of persons. In the event of economic exploitation, the question of the manner in which money is obtained or paid is not relevant for the existence of the criminal act.

Furthermore, in its judgement No IV Kp 47610/2015 of 17 June 2021, the High Court of Koper pointed out, with regard to the legal sign "whoever for the purpose of exploitation", that it is a normative legal sign of a value nature. Further, in its judgement, the High Court explained that the Supreme Court's case law is uniform and considers it prohibited to derive financial gain from the prostitution of others and to interfere with the right to self-decision. This understanding of exploitation through prostitution is also in compliance with the international instruments to which our country has acceded. For example, Article 1 of the 1950 United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others contains a commitment to punish the exploitation of the prostitution of others, even if the latter consents to the prostitution. According to the High Court, the purpose of the intent to gain profit is also manifested in the fact that it is the perpetrator who sets the prices of the services and thus the amount of their earnings. Exploitation is also manifested in the control over the victim. The courts also define exploitation in the obtaining of profit by taking advantage of the victim's financial hardship or poor living conditions. It is not the persons' earnings that are essential for the assessment of the statutory element of exploitation, but the essence of the offence of the exploitation of prostitution is that the perpetrators benefit from the prostitution of persons. In the event of economic exploitation, the question of the manner in which money is obtained or paid is not relevant for the existence of the criminal act.

*Table 10: Criminal proceedings and sanctions for perpetrators of the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings in 2021*

| **Criminalisation of trafficking in human beings** |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of persons in criminal proceedings | 32 natural persons and 4 legal entities |
| Number of investigations launched | 2 (against 6 natural persons) |
| Number of indictments | 0 |
| **Sanctions and measures** |  |
| Number of convictions for the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings (convicted persons) | 0 |
| Number of convictions due to the use of services of a victim of trafficking in human beings | 0 |
| **Length of imprisonment related to deprivation of freedom** |  |
| – shortest duration | 0 |
| – longest duration | 0 |

### Criminal offence of exploitation through prostitution (Article 175 of the KZ-1)

Regarding the adoption of the state prosecutor's decisions, the state prosecutors of the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia in the reporting year:

* filed one indictment regarding the criminal offence as per Article 175 of the KZ-1, i.e., against 1 natural person to the detriment of 413 victims.

District public prosecutor's offices also deal with individual cases of exploitation through prostitution.

* In 2020, the District State Prosecutor's Office in Murska Sobota received a request for an investigation of the offence of exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1 against one natural person and to the detriment of one victim (female). In the reporting year, however, the prosecution was dropped by the public prosecutor after the judicial investigation had been completed, as there was no evidence that the accused had committed the alleged offence (witnesses did not corroborate the victim's allegations, nor was the victim herself convincing in her testimony).
* Kranj District State Prosecutor’s Office filed one decision rejecting the complaint in the reporting year due to the criminal offence of exploitation through prostitution as per Article 175 of the KZ-1, i.e., against one natural person and to the detriment of two victims (female).
* The District State Prosecutor's Office in Maribor received one report under Paragraph 10 of Article 148 of the Criminal Procedure Act for the offence of exploitation through prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1, against one natural person and to the detriment of several victims (female), but at the time of reporting no prosecutorial decision had been taken.
* In 2020, the District State Prosecutor's Office in Celje received a request for an investigation of the offence of exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1 against one natural person and to the detriment of one victim (female). In the reporting year, however, the prosecution was dropped by the public prosecutor after the judicial investigation had been completed, as there was no evidence that the accused had committed the alleged offence.
* There was also one request for an investigation for the offence of exploitation through prostitution under Paragraph 1 of Article 175 of the KZ-1, against one natural person and to the detriment of five victims (female). In the reporting year, the District State Prosecutor's Office in Celje received an acquittal for the offence of abuse of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1 against one natural person and to the detriment of one victim (female). The Public Prosecutor's Office has filed an appeal which has not yet been decided.
* During the reporting year, the Ljubljana District State Prosecutor's Office received two criminal charges against two natural persons for the offence of exploitation through prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1, but at the time of reporting, no prosecutorial decision had yet been taken.

During the reporting year, the higher courts also decided three cases from previous years for the offence of exploitation through prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1, specifically the higher court:

* in the first case, dismissed the appeal of the public prosecutor, partially upheld only the appeals of the two defendants, and slightly reduced their prison sentences, reducing the single sentence to 8 years and 6 months imprisonment (reducing the prison sentence by 6 months each), and in the remaining case upheld the judgement of the Court of First Instance;
* in the second case, upheld the appeal of the accused legal person in its entirety and partially upheld the appeals of the six defendants – acquitting the accused legal person on the grounds that there was no evidence that they had committed the alleged offence (there was no evidence that the legal person had obtained any pecuniary advantage, and therefore the basis for the legal person's liability was not established); the Court of Appeal omitted specific allegations from the verdict and legally defined the offences alleged against the four defendants as an offence under Paragraph a of Article175 of the KZ-1. As a result, it reduced the sentence of a large number of the defendants so that it:

̶ sentenced the first person to 2 years and 2 months' imprisonment and a fine of EUR 6,018, and confiscated EUR 1,770 of the proceeds of crime;

̶ sentenced the second person to 1 year's imprisonment;

̶ imposed a suspended sentence on the third person, imposing a sentence of 9 months' imprisonment, suspended for a probationary period of 2 years;

̶ imposed a suspended sentence on the fourth person, imposing a sentence of 9 months' imprisonment, suspended for a probationary period of 2 years;

̶ imposed a suspended sentence on the fifth person, imposing a sentence of 6 months' imprisonment, suspended for a probationary period of 1 year and 6 months; and

̶ imposed a suspended sentence on the sixth person, imposing a sentence of 10 months' imprisonment, suspended for a probationary period of 2 years.

Provisional detention was also abolished;

* + in the third case, the higher court partially modified the judgement of the Court of First Instance in the part of conviction, by omitting the unproven parts of the charges, by defining the offence in law in accordance with Paragraphs 2 and 2 of Article 175 of the KZ-1, and by imposing slightly higher sentences as a consequence. The Court imposed a suspended sentence:

̶ on the first person, imposing a sentence of 1 year and 6 months' imprisonment, which will not be imposed unless the accused commits a new offence within the probationary period of 3 years; and

̶ on the second person, imposing a sentence of 1 year and 2 months' imprisonment, which will not be imposed unless the accused commits a new offence within the probationary period of 3 years.

###  Findings of the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia

Trafficking in human beings is a severe criminal offence and a severe violation of human rights occurring through the world. Any country may be a country of origin, transit country or a destination, as trafficking in human beings knows no national borders. Usually, this is an international organised criminal activity of many people during a long time period, which makes detection and providing evidence of these criminal offences difficult, time-consuming and complex. Identifying and addressing trafficking in human beings requires a great deal of specific knowledge, listening and understanding.

Perpetrators are usually connected by the profitability of the respective criminal offence. The latest trends in human trafficking show one common characteristic, i.e. that they treat people as objects and thus exploit their vulnerability or another personality trait, characteristic, or simplicity in order to obtain a pecuniary advantage. It is typical that victims usually have some personal freedom, personal documents, are allowed to use phones and the internet, have some of their own money, usually voluntarily enter into relationships with a criminal group, and often have legal residence and work permits in the Republic of Slovenia. Almost always, the victims of the foregoing criminal offences are aliens, usually women, exceptionally minors. The victims always come from economically poor countries (Ukraine, the Dominican Republic, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary) and are vulnerable due to some personal reason (e.g. unemployment, poor employment possibilities, low level of education, extremely low earnings, indebtedness, obligation to maintain minor children, disabled or unemployed partners, obligation to support an extended family, serious illness in the family, personal simplicity, state of war, etc.). The exploited persons do not usually recognise themselves as victims, which makes the process of proving criminality even more difficult because they justify, accept, minimise, pretend, feel ashamed or even deny the actions of the accused. The essence of trafficking in human beings is the vulnerability of the victims, who accept a subordinate position because of their vulnerability and are outwardly satisfied to earn at least some money, even though the accused takes the majority of the money. With the subsequent poor earnings, they support themselves and their relatives. Eventually, the victims find themselves in such financial thrall to those exploiting them that they remain in and persist with the relationship. Meaningful equal treatment of victims is also reflected in the crime of exploitation through prostitution.

Enlisting victims through modern electronic channels and the use of social media is also considered recruitment, while residing in locations in the defendants' domain is considered to be accommodation. In Slovenia, the recruitment of victims through the internet is also increasingly being detected, and the trend towards more sophisticated forms of execution of the offence continues, which further complicates the gathering of proof of the offence in question and makes the use of covert investigative measures in this type of case indispensable. International cooperation is also necessary for obtaining evidence. However, as the perpetrators also keep a close eye on the decisions of the courts and adapt their actions and methods of exploitation accordingly, it is very important that financial investigations are implemented in parallel with the criminal proceedings, with the aim of confiscating assets of illicit origin.

The crime of trafficking in human beings, which is included in the section on crimes against humanity, in which social values are protected, is considered to be so socially unacceptable and reprehensible that it is punishable even when the victim consents to the act. This protects the social values that make us human. Protecting these values also requires a different approach and understanding in addressing the crime in question.

## Activities of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia

In 2021, the IRSD also exercised control over the employment and work of foreigners on the basis of the provisions of the Employment, Self-Employment and Work of Foreigners Act (hereinafter: ZZSDT), the Employment Relationships Act (hereinafter: ZDR1) and the Transnational Provision of Services Act (hereinafter: ZČmIS).

In 2021, 28 breaches of the ZZSDT were detected, which is less than in 2020, when there were 40. The most violations (20) were detected due to failure to comply with the provision of Paragraph 4 of Article 7 of the ZZSDT; in these cases the employers ensured that aliens carried out other work than that for which consent was given or seasonal work permit was issued as defined in the procedure of issuing or extension of a single permit or EU Blue Card or issuing of written approval. In 3 cases, a violation of the fifth paragraph of Article 7 of the ZZSDT was also established, according to which an employer who performs the activity of providing work to the user may conclude employment contracts only with foreigners residing in the Republic of Slovenia on the basis of the EU blue card or for whom consent to employment, self-employment or work has been given in the process of issuing or renewing a single permit or issuing a written approval, and with foreigners who have free access to the labour market in accordance with this Act. In 2 cases, breaches of Article 36 were also found, which provides that an employer may only carry out the supply of goods and services with posted workers on the basis of a declaration of the commencement of the provision of services, in cases specified in a list of cases. The inspectors also found 3 infringements of Paragraph 2 of Article 45 of the ZZSDT, according to which the foreigner is obliged to keep at the place where they work the information sheet, if it has been served to them, or the seasonal work permit, and to produce such documentation as evidence in the proceedings at the request of the competent supervisory authority.

With regard to the employment of foreign workers, labour inspectors note that employers, especially in the construction, transport, catering and tourism, and metalworking sectors, are faced with a shortage of available labour force in the labour market and thus resort to employing foreigners, which in many cases is also linked to the provision of labour in contravention of the provisions of the Labour Market Regulation Act (ZUDT).

The IRSD faces difficulties in monitoring violations under Article 7 of the ZZSDT, as it is difficult to establish where employers who illegally provide workers to users are actually performing the work. An even bigger problem in proving irregularities is employers who hire foreign workers and then send them to work in other EU countries. Some of these employers are entered in the register for the provision of work to the user at the MDDSZ. As they are not allowed to provide third-country workers with work permits to users, the latter are ostensibly carrying out "service activities" with the users, which they have registered in addition to their main activity (supplying workers to another user). The problem is, therefore, that agencies can carry out other activities in addition to their main activity (supplying workers to a user).

Inspectors have also detected cases in 2021 of workers' incomes being "raised" for family reunification. Employers increase the salary or pay mileage and other allowances to employees before they apply for family reunification in order to show higher incomes over a period of time to prove the amount of income needed to comply with the conditions for family reunification. When the employee acquires these rights, the employer reduces their income again. In addition, it is difficult for inspectors in the field to obtain information sheets from foreign workers, as they are usually not aware that they need one. All employment procedures are handled by the employers, and employment documentation is usually not translated into a language that foreigners can understand.

In the field of transnational provision of services and posting of workers, the IRSD also monitors compliance with the provisions of the ZČmIS. During the inspections of the implementation of this law, inspectors found 10 violations in 2021, which is fewer than in the previous reporting period (13). Thus, 3 infringements of Paragraph 2 of Article 12 of the ZČmIS were found, as employers did not have a valid A1 certificate for posted workers. In 7 cases, infringements were found due to non-compliance with the provision of Article 14 of the ZČmIS, as the foreign employer did not register with the ZRSZ before the commencement of the cross-border provision of services, or the foreign employer did not keep and make available at the request of the supervisory authority the documentation referred to in the law during the cross-border provision of services in Slovenia.

As the supervision of posted workers is most effective at the place of work, cooperation between the supervisory authorities of the Member States is crucial. This allows controls to focus on the place where the service is provided and the place where the employer posting the workers is registered. The IRSD believes that the establishment of the European Labour Authority (ELA) and the strengthening of supervision and cooperation between EU Member States will contribute to improving the rights of posted workers. In addition, inspectors who use requests for legal assistance from foreign inspection bodies in the context of the surveillance of the ZČmIS report positive experiences of cooperation with some foreign supervisory authorities through the Internal Market Information System (IMI).

The ZČmIS was amended in 2021 to apply the same rules on remuneration for work performed by posted workers as apply to local workers under the legislation and collective agreements in general force at the level of the country of posting, to limit the length of posting periods and to make it compulsory to ensure that the principle of equal treatment is respected where a cross-border service is provided by posted workers employed by an employer for the purpose of providing the work. Inspectors still find on the ground that liable persons do not have the required documentation, and the amendment also means that employers now only provide translations of documentation at the request of the authority.

In 2021, inspectors also found violations of the rights of workers (Slovenian and foreign citizens) who are sent to work abroad or in the Member States of the European Union by employers registered in the Republic of Slovenia. 39 infringements of Article 209 of the ZDR-1, which defines the mandatory elements of employment contracts for workers posted abroad by their employers, were detected. Violations were also found of Item 4 of Paragraph 1 of Article 54 of the ZDR-1, which explicitly provides in which cases a fixed-term employment contract may be concluded. In 8 cases, it was found that a fixed-term employment contract for the employment of an alien or a stateless person holding a single permit as provided for in the law regulating the entry and residence of aliens and a seasonal work permit as provided for in the law regulating the employment, self-employment and work of aliens, except where the single permit is issued on the basis of a consent to employment, self-employment or work, was concluded in breach of the exception provided for in this Article.

In 2021, the IRSD filed 2 criminal charges under Article 113 of the Criminal Code (in conjunction with Article 196 of the Criminal Code) against two legal persons who were engaged in the activity of cleaning petrol stations. The criminal charges involve 625 workers or potential victims of trafficking, both women and men.

## Activities of the Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia

In 2021, FURS also dealt with infringements of the Prevention of Illegal Work and Employment

 Act (hereinafter referred to as: ZPDZC-1) and filed complaints or reports regarding criminal offences under the KZ-1.

In 2021, FURS implemented more than 10,000 controls on illegal employment, including on the employment of third-country nationals. Illegal employment of third-country nationals was detected in 44 employers. The most frequent irregularities related to the illegal employment of third-country nationals were found in the construction and catering sectors, as well as in the transport and storage, processing and motor vehicle repair sectors. Most irregularities were found in the employment of nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

In 2021, 40 minor offence proceedings were initiated against offenders (legal entities) in relation to the illegal employment of third-country nationals for violation of the provision of Item 6 of Paragraph 1 of Article 5 of the ZPDZC-1, of which 36 minor offence proceedings were concluded in the reporting year. A total of 136 offenders were fined in 2021 for illegal employment of third-country nationals, amounting to

EUR 231,500.

In the minor offence proceedings, 36 employers were sanctioned for the offence of the illegal employment of third-country nationals. The total amount of fines imposed on the offenders (legal entities, employers and their responsible persons) for the offence in question amounted to EUR 198,500 and 5 warnings were issued. 75 natural persons were also sanctioned in relation to this minor offence. All of them were third-country nationals, who were fined a total of EUR 33,000 for committing an offence under Paragraph 3 of Article 23 of the ZPDZC-1, and 9 warnings were issued.

In 2021, FURS issued a total of 2 criminal reports for the commission of an offence under Paragraph 1 of Article 199 of the KZ-1 (illegal employment), i.e. 1 criminal complaint and 1 report. In the reporting period, FURS filed 23 criminal complaints and 5 reports of suspected offences under Article 196 of the KZ-1 (violation of fundamental rights of workers).

In the reporting period, FURS did not file any criminal complaint or report of suspicion of a criminal offence as per Article 113 of the KZ-1 (trafficking in human beings).

# Assistance and protection of victims of human trafficking

The assistance to the victims of trafficking in human beings was provided within the framework of two programmes financed by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and implemented by non-governmental and humanitarian organisations selected by means of a public tender. In addition, the implementation of the (re)integration project for victims of trafficking in human beings and the project for identifying and informing of victims of trafficking in human beings and/or sexual violence in the procedures for the recognition of international protection in Slovenia (PATS) continued during the reporting year. A novelty in 2021 is a project providing support to persons in prostitution and those leaving it, co-funded by the Ministry of Health.

## "Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Crisis Accommodation" programme

The MDDSZ co-financed the "Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Crisis Accommodation" programme in 2020 and 2021, implemented by the Caritas Slovenia. It is a two-year programme providing comprehensive assistance for up to 30-days to victims of human trafficking (adults and children) who must be removed immediately from their environment.

In 2021, two people were placed in crisis accommodation, specifically:

* 1 female, Slovenian citizen,
* 1 transgender person, citizen of Slovenia.

Both victims were dealt with by the police in the pre-trial proceedings as victims of the offence of "Trafficking in human beings" under Article 113 and the offence of "Exploitation through prostitution" under Article 175 of the Criminal Code and were accommodated in the crisis accommodation for a total of 63 care days.

The person in crisis accommodation is provided with accommodation, food, first psycho-social aid, emergency medical care, counselling, information about their legal rights, interpreting, advocacy, social occupation, companionship, escort, protection and safety, assistance when returning to their homeland and material assistance. They also had 24-hour access to an expert worker. In addition to this worker, three lay workers and trained volunteers are also involved in working with these persons.

The costs of the project financed by the MDDSZ under the contract (labour costs for one professional worker, labour costs of lay workers according to the actual number of hours worked, costs of care days to the extent of the number of placements realised, and costs of prevention workshops) amounted to EUR 40,202.91 in 2021. The programme ended on 31 December 2021 and a call for tenders for the implementation of the project Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Crisis Accommodation in 2022 and 2023 was prepared and implemented for the new period in the reporting year.

## "Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Accommodation in a Safe Place" programme

The "Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Accommodation in a Safe Place" project for the period 2020–2021, financed by the Ministry of the Interior, was implemented by the Association Ključ in the reporting year.

In 2021, two female victims, both adult Slovenian citizens with a history of exploitation for prostitution, were included in the safe accommodation programme. A total of 212 days of care were provided, including accommodation, protection, food and other basic necessities, accompaniment and advocacy, support in managing health conditions, psychosocial conversations, relief conversations and participation in organised sports and other leisure activities.

The costs of the programme, co-financed by the Ministry of the Interior within the framework of a contract (100 per cent of salary for one employed expert worker, costs of accommodation and other costs of the project), amounted to EUR 31,696.88 in 2021. A call for tenders for the implementation of the project Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Accommodation in a Safe Place in 2022–2024 was prepared and implemented for the new period in the reporting year.

## "Reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings" project

In 2021, the Ključ Association also implemented the "Reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings" project, which was co-financed by the Ministry of the Interior – the Police. This is a continuation of a two-year project implemented in 2019 and 2020 under the EU Internal Security Fund.

The project is intended for citizens of the Republic of Slovenia who have been treated as victims of trafficking abroad, as well as citizens of European Union countries and third-country citizens who have been treated as victims of trafficking in human beings in the Republic of Slovenia in pre-trial or criminal proceedings and legally reside in the Republic of Slovenia. For victims, the programme, which is a logical consequence of the Programme Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, represents the first step towards living an independent life without violence, exploitation and violation of human rights.

In 2021, 4 persons (female) were included in the programme, 3 Slovenian nationals and a Malagasy national. They participated in therapeutic workshops, learning support, regular physical activities and organised trips, counselling and relief conversations. All persons were also provided with psychotherapy, assistance and support with paperwork and health checks, and other services agreed in their personal plans, in accordance with their expressed needs.

## "Informing victims of trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence in the procedures of recognition of international protection (PATS)" project

The PATS project aims to inform applicants for international protection about the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings. The purpose of the project is to raise the awareness of people who mostly do not recognise the dangers and results of human trafficking, and to use a suitable approach to encourage them to actively participate in preventing various forms of exploitation. The overall objective is to identify more effectively vulnerable groups (potential victims of human trafficking, sexual or gender-based violence) in need of special treatment.

These are individual conversations in the language the applicant understands. In the case of children and adolescents, information is provided in a way that is appropriate and adapted to their age and stage of development. The conversation usually lasts 60 minutes. In the case of unaccompanied minors, the conversation takes place immediately after the application for international protection has been accepted, and in the case of women as well as men, within 24 hours of receiving notification from the contracting authority.

From 8 December 2020 to 24 November 2021, 292 conversations were conducted in the asylum home, its branches, accommodation facilities for minors and in the Aliens Centre. In this period, the project was implemented by the Institute of African Studies, which was selected through a public tender. One person was suspected of trafficking in human beings, but this was not subsequently confirmed. The largest proportion of persons informed in the reporting year were unaccompanied minors, male, Afghan nationals (146 out of a total of 292 informed persons).

## "Support to persons in prostitution and those leaving it" project

The Ministry of Health provided funding for a project of support to persons in prostitution and those leaving it, as part of a public tender to co-finance health protection and promotion programmes in 2021. The project is aimed at people in prostitution who, due to their specific life circumstances, are not (yet) ready to cooperate with law enforcement authorities but need support. The main objective of the programme is to offer support and holistic treatment to persons in prostitution in accordance with their needs.

In 2021, the programme included 6 persons (4 women, 1 man, 1 transgender person), all Slovenian citizens. They were provided with counselling, relief conversations, referral to institutions, support in making a report and informal free time to socialise.

# International activities and partnerships

Effective cooperation between all stakeholders, who in their work encounter trafficking in human beings, is crucial for the protection of victims as well as for the prosecution of perpetrators. As this is most often an international organised criminal activity, international cooperation, especially with the countries of origin of the victims of human trafficking, is also very important to effectively combat this phenomenon.

## International activities

In the international arena, members of the IWG THB participated in various international meetings and events related to activities to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings.

### The national coordinator for combatting trafficking in human beings and SPCTHB

The National Coordinator attended the meeting of the NATC SEE informal network from 26 to 28 January 2021, which took place via a videoconference. The purpose of the meeting was to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the network and the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. The discussion, which was attended by several high-level representatives of international organisations, including Valiant Richey, Special Representative and Coordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and Petya Nestorova, Executive Secretary of the Convention of the Council of Europe on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, focused mainly on the efforts made by the national coordinators in the fight against trafficking in human beings, the presentation of the achievements of the informal network, the importance of the Protocol, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on trafficking in human beings in SE Europe.

In the field of EU cooperation, regular meetings of the informal network of national rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms (hereinafter: NREM), which took place remotely also in 2021 due to the Covid-19 epidemic, continued. The group met twice in the reporting year, on 6 and 7 May during the Portuguese Presidency and on 6 December during the Slovenian Presidency. During the meeting under the Portuguese Presidency, the discussion focused on the new EU strategies in the fight against organised crime and the fight against trafficking in human beings. During Slovenia's Presidency, NREM paid more attention to the implementation of the new challenges highlighted by the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2025 and discussed the update of the 2011 Directive on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, as well as the strengthening of international cooperation and integration with countries of origin and transit, and with international and regional partners.

1. The Council of Europe conference "Together towards a future without child trafficking in Europe", organised in the framework of the THB LIBERI project, took place in Strasbourg on 4 and 5 May 2021. Participants discussed new trends in child trafficking, particularly in the area of internet use. The role of law enforcement authorities and other institutions in the continuous development of new tools and the provision of additional resources for the successful and effective investigation of such crimes was highlighted.

In the framework of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of Europe, a videoconference entitled "Ten Years of Directive 2011/36/EU and the new EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2025" was held in Lisbon on 25 May 2021. The focus was on the objectives of the new EU strategy on combatting trafficking in human beings, with an emphasis on establishing a system of impunity for victims of trafficking, effective victim care and reintegration. The National Coordinator also contributed to the conference with a presentation on the gender aspects of trafficking in human beings.

The 21st OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Human Beings Conference on "Meeting the Demand: Addressing the Root Causes of Trafficking in Human Beings" was held via videoconference from 14 to 16 June 2021. The debate highlighted the importance of adopting national action plans to respect human rights in business and to strengthen cooperation between the State, companies, trade unions and non-governmental organisations. Some good practices were also presented on how to discourage users of services and goods related to trafficking in human beings.

From 19 to 22 October 2021, the Ulm Alliance against Human Trafficking and Forced Prostitution hosted an international videoconference "Exits from Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Exploitation within the Danube Region", which aimed at sharing the experiences of different institutions working in the field of combatting trafficking in human beings at the operational level.

On 15 and 16 November, a meeting of National Coordinators in the framework of the OSCE and the Council of Europe took place via videoconference, at which new developments and good practices in the fight against trafficking in human beings were presented, as well as proposals for maximising the effectiveness of National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms to combat trafficking in human beings. The second part of the conference focused on measures to provide support and assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings.

### Police

When investigating criminal offences of trafficking in human beings, the Police exchange information with EU Member States within its cooperation with Europol, and Interpol when cooperating with third countries.

In accordance with the restrictive Covid-19 measures, the police also participated in the EU policy cycle to combat serious forms of international organised crime. In the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Crime Threats (EMPACT), it implemented the activities from the Operational Action Plan for 2021.

### Participation in JAD (Joint Action Days) activities

In the reporting year, the police participated in three European Joint Actions on Trafficking in Human Beings (EMPACT THB).

Between 31 May and 6 June 2021, the police participated in the implementation of joint actions of EU Member States in the field of prevention of forced labour. The activities were led by the IRSD, with the participation of representatives of the FURS and the Independent Workers' Union of Slovenia. The purpose of the activity was to identify victims of trafficking in human beings exploited for forced labour or other forms of exploitation. The police carried out the activities at border crossing points for international traffic.

Between 1 and 5 July 2021, the police participated in the implementation of activities to identify

 child victims of trafficking in human beings in relation to all forms of exploitation, in the framework of the Joint Action Days. The activities were carried out at the air border crossing point at Jože Pučnik Airport and in the areas of the police directorates of Koper, Ljubljana, Novo mesto, Celje and Murska Sobota, where the tasks of protecting the state border with the Republic of Croatia are implemented. During the activities, the police did not identify any victims of trafficking in human beings.

Between 8 and 12 November 2021, the police took part in the implementation of a joint EU action

 on the prevention of forced criminality and forced begging. Increased monitoring was carried out to identify victims of trafficking in human beings who are exploited for prostitution and sexual abuse, forced begging, forced execution of crimes and other forms of exploitation of victims of THB. One of the objectives of the action was to identify persons involved in trafficking in human beings or in the execution of other officially prosecutable offences. The activities were carried out at the air border crossing point at the Jože Pučnik Ljubljana Airport and in the areas of the Ljubljana, Maribor, Koper and Celje Police Directorates. During the activities, the police did not identify any victims of trafficking in human beings.

### MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MZZ)

Within the framework of international organisations, the MZZ regularly monitored the issue of trafficking in human beings (e.g. meetings of the OSCE Security Committee, the Council of Europe and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime). The topic was also addressed at several multilateral events, such as the 21st OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Human Beings Conference (14–16 June) and the High Level Event on Trafficking in Human Beings organised by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Human Beings (ICAT, 27 September).

A high-level meeting to assess the implementation of the UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons was held in New York on 22–23 November 2021. In the context of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, a resolution on trafficking in human beings was adopted by consensus in the Third Committee, addressing the technical aspects of international cooperation in efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. In adopting the resolution, Slovenia joined the EU in a united statement condemning the instrumentalisation of migration.

### Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia (IRSD)

In March, a representative of the IRSD participated in a two-day videoconference and working meeting on the European Joint Action JAD 2021, and in April, she presented the work of the IRSD and the European Joint Action JAD at a UNODC videoconference on "Trafficking in Human Beings for Labour Exploitation in South-Eastern Europe". Two working meetings were held in May 2021, organised by the Dutch Labour Inspectorate, which led activities on the EU crime priorities "Developing, coordinating and implementing action days against trafficking in human beings, with a focus on preventing labour exploitation"

in the framework of the Operational Action Plan 2021, in cooperation with France, Italy, the United Kingdom and Romania. In June, IRSD representatives attended the 21st OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Human Beings and in July a working meeting with representatives of the Dutch Labour Inspectorate on trafficking in human beings. In October 2021, a representative of the IRSD together with a representative of the Police participated in an EMPACT working meeting on the preparation of the 2022 EU Member State Action Plan on THB.

The IRSD continued to participate actively in joint European actions on trafficking in human beings in 2021 (see Section 5.1.2).

### Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia (FURS)

In 2021, FURS participated in the Joint European Action against Trafficking in Human Beings – JAD THB 2021, in the framework of which 35 controls were implemented and 4 violations were detected (2 violations of the ZDavPR and 2 violations of the ZPDZC-1).

## Partnerships and research

Partnerships between organisations engaged in preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings have been established in Slovenia for a number of years. When dealing with individual cases of trafficking in human beings, the Police cooperate closely with the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office, and non-governmental and humanitarian organisations. There is particularly close cooperation with the Caritas Slovenia and the Ključ Association, which are involved in police procedures to inform identified victims of their rights and the forms of assistance available to victims of trafficking in human beings in Slovenia. There is also intensive cooperation with these two organisations in the implementation of programmes for the care of victims of trafficking in human beings in crisis and safe accommodation and in the framework of the (re)integration project.

Exemplary cooperation also takes place between the Police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which regularly informs the Police about findings of diplomatic and consular representations relating to the problem of third-country female citizens or cases in which suspicion may be raised that female job seekers could become victims of human trafficking.

Good cooperation between the Police, IRSD, FURS and the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia within the framework of the joint European action JAD 2020 continued in 2021 as well.

With their contributions and experience, state prosecutors at the SDT RS actively participate in various training sessions in the field of trafficking in human beings abroad and training sessions organised for their employees by institutions participating in the IWG THB.

In 2021, the IRSD worked with representatives of the SPCTHB to develop Guidelines for Labour Inspectors on the Identification of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings.

There was no specific research on trafficking in human beings funded by the Slovenian Government in the reporting year.

# Conclusion

In 2021, as in the previous year, the work of the IWG THB was significantly limited due to the Covid-19 epidemic but, nevertheless, it implemented the key activities with regard to preventing and combatting human trafficking in accordance with the Action Plan for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the 2021–2020 Period.

In the field of legislation and policies, the adoption of the Amendments to the Residence Registration Act and an amendment to the Foreigners Act, the amended provisions of which affect the improvement of conditions for protection and assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings, is important. In order to strengthen cooperation with the countries of origin of victims of trafficking in human beings, a Protocol on Cooperation against Trafficking in Human Beings and Child Abuse was signed with the Republic of Montenegro in December 2021. In June 2021, Slovenia entered the third round of the assessment on the implementation of the Convention of the Council of Europe on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and the related IWG THB activities. The inter-ministerial working group also prepared an annual report on its work, which was presented to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, and the Action Plan for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the period 2021–2022.

In 2021, due to the Covid-19 epidemic, preventive activities were carried out to a much lesser extent than in the past, especially in the field of training of experts dealing with trafficking in human beings. In November 2021, the systematic awareness-raising activities for children and minors in primary and secondary school on trafficking in human beings were launched, and other established activities to raise awareness and prevent this phenomenon continued, including in the Roma community.

 In the field of detection, investigation and prosecution of criminal offences of trafficking in human beings, it was established that the exploitation of victims of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual abuse still prevails in Slovenia. In 2021, the police addressed 42 crimes of trafficking in human beings against 18 natural persons and 2 legal entities and identified 40 victims of trafficking in human beings. As part of their competence, the IRSD and the FURS also implemented the activities related to detecting cases of human trafficking aimed particularly at the exploitation of forced labour. In the reporting year, the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office submitted one request for an investigation for the offence of trafficking in human beings, and the District State Prosecutor's Office in Celje submitted one request for an investigation. In the reporting year, no indictments were filed for the offence of trafficking in human beings, and no convictions were passed in this area.

 In 2021, assistance and protection for victims of trafficking in human beings was also provided by Caritas Slovenia and the Association Ključ as part of projects financed by the MNZ and MDDSZ. Two people were placed in crisis accommodation during the reporting year and were subsequently included in the accommodation in a safe place programme. Other victims declined the offered option of accommodation. Four persons were included in the reintegration programme. In 2021, a project to support persons in prostitution and those leaving it was launched, and the PATS project to identify, assist and protect victims of trafficking and/or sexual violence in international protection procedures continued in the asylum centre.

In the international arena, members of the IWG THB participated in a number of events and conferences, which were mostly held remotely due to the epidemic, as happened in the previous year. Regular meetings of the NATC SEE and NREM networks were held. One of the NREM meetings was chaired by Slovenia, as the country holding the Presidency of the Council of Europe, and focused on the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2025, the update of the Directive on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and the strengthening of international cooperation and networking with countries of origin and transit, as well as with international and regional partners. Slovenia also actively participated in three joint European actions to combat trafficking in human beings (EMPACT THB).