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**Report of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group**

**on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings**

**for 2022**

**Ljubljana, May 2023**

**CONTENTS**

[Introduction 3](#_Toc139610921)

[1 Legislation and policies 4](#_Toc139610922)

[**1.1** **Amendments to legislation** 4](#_Toc139610923)

[**1.2** **Implementation of activities in accordance with adopted national and international obligations** 5](#_Toc139610924)

[2 Prevention 6](#_Toc139610925)

[**2.1** **Raising awareness among the wider public** 6](#_Toc139610926)

[**2.1.1** **EU and World Anti-Trafficking Day** 6](#_Toc139610927)

[**2.1.2** **Website** 6](#_Toc139610928)

[**2.1.3** **Media** 7](#_Toc139610929)

[**2.1.4** **Other activities** 7](#_Toc139610930)

[**2.2** **Raising awareness among high-risk target groups** 7](#_Toc139610931)

[**2.2.1** **Raising awareness among children and adolescents** 7](#_Toc139610932)

[**2.2.2** **Preventive action in the field of raising awareness and prevention of human trafficking in the Roma community** 9](#_Toc139610933)

[**2.2.3** **Information for other vulnerable groups** 10](#_Toc139610934)

[**2.3** **Raising the awareness and training of the expert public** 11](#_Toc139610935)

[3 Detection, investigation and prosecution of criminal offences related to human trafficking 13](#_Toc139610936)

[**3.1** **Police activities** 13](#_Toc139610937)

[**3.1.1** **Trafficking in human beings pursuant to Article 113 of the Criminal Code (KZ-1)** 13](#_Toc139610938)

[**3.1.2** **Other criminal offences** 15](#_Toc139610939)

[**3.2** **The Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia and district state prosecutors' offices** 17](#_Toc139610940)

[**3.2.1** **Criminal offence of trafficking in human beings (Article 113 of the KZ-1)** 17](#_Toc139610941)

[**3.2.2** **Criminal offence of exploitation through prostitution (Article 175 of the KZ-1)** 19](#_Toc139610942)

[**3.2.3** **Findings of the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia** 19](#_Toc139610943)

[**3.3** **Activities of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia** 20](#_Toc139610944)

[**3.4** **Activities of the Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia** 21](#_Toc139610945)

[4 Assistance and protection of victims of human trafficking 23](#_Toc139610946)

[**4.1** **"Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Slovenia – Crisis Accommodation" programme** 23](#_Toc139610947)

[**4.2** **"Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Accommodation in a Safe Place" programme** 24](#_Toc139610948)

[**4.3**  **"Reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings" project** 24](#_Toc139610949)

[**4.4** **"Informing victims of trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence in the procedures of recognition of international protection (PATS)" project** 24](#_Toc139610950)

[**4.5** **"Support to persons in prostitution and those leaving it" project** 25](#_Toc139610951)

[5 International activities and partnerships 26](#_Toc139610952)

[**5.1** **International activities** 26](#_Toc139610953)

[**5.1.1** **The national coordinator for combatting trafficking in human beings and MNZ SPCTHB** 26](#_Toc139610954)

[**5.1.2** **The Police** 27](#_Toc139610955)

[**5.1.3** **IRSD** 28](#_Toc139610956)

[**5.1.4** **FURS** 28](#_Toc139610957)

[**5.2** **Partnerships and research** 28](#_Toc139610958)

[Conclusion 30](#_Toc139610959)

**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 2022–2022 Period. The national coordinator was provided with professional support in his work by the Service for Preventing and Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings at the Ministry of the Interior (hereinafter: MNZ SPCTHB).

The report on the work of the IWG THB for 2022 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 chapter 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**

**1.1 Amendments to legislation**

On 21 November 2022, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted a draft amendment to the Criminal Code (KZ-1J), which, among other things, transposes the provisions of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. The amendment to the Criminal Code was approved by the National Assembly on 27 January 2023.

The amendment amends Article 113 of the Criminal Code (KZ-1), which defines the offence of trafficking in human beings to include begging, which is covered by the Directive, among the forms of exploitation. In addition, the phrase "slavery-like relationships" is added to the Paragraph 1 of Article 113, which includes, among other things, debt bondage, serfdom, the sale of a woman for marriage, the handing over of a woman to another person for a certain equivalent, the situation in which a woman belongs to another person after the death of her husband, and the handing over of a child to another person for the purpose of exploitation of the child or of the child's labour, which also corresponds to the definition under the Directive. A new sixth paragraph is added to the Article, which establishes as a qualified form of the offence the commission of the offence by an official or public servant in the performance of their duties.

In addition, the offences of enslavement under Article 112 of the KZ-1 and trafficking in human beings under Article 113 of the KZ-1 are added to the offences referred to in Paragraph 3 of Article 90, for which the statute of limitation starts to run from the date on which the victim reaches the age of majority, and not from the date on which the offence is committed.

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 North Macedonia on 18 March 2022. 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.

On 19 December 2022, the European Commission adopted a proposal for amendments to Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, which includes:

* the inclusion of forced marriages and illegal adoptions in the list of minimum forms of exploitation;
* explicit reference to the online dimension of the crime;
* the introduction of a mandatory regime of sanctions for legal persons, differentiated for standard offences and serious offences;
* reference to the legal framework on asset freezing and confiscation;
* the formal establishment of national referral mechanisms and national contact points for the referral of victims;
* the definition of a new offence relating to the use of services that are subject to exploitation, knowing that a person is a victim of human trafficking;
* a requirement for annual data collection and reporting on indicators regarding trafficking in human beings.

The proposal for a Directive is expected to be adopted by the EU institutions by the end of 2023 and Member States will have one year to transpose the new provisions into national law. In order to speed up the availability of statistics, the European Commission proposes that Article 19a (annual data collection and reporting requirement) should apply from the date of entry into force of the proposal for a Directive.

**1.2 Implementation of activities in accordance with adopted national and international obligations**

In 2022, the IWG THB met three times and discussed topical issues relating to the fight against human trafficking and adopted suitable measures for more effective implementation of policies in this field. In addition, the Working Group was convened twice to discuss forced labour issues and once to plan preventive activities aimed at informing Ukrainian citizens and raising awareness of trafficking in human beings among the general public.

The Ukraine crisis led to the adoption of the EU Joint Plan in May 2022 to address the risks of trafficking in human beings and to support potential victims among those fleeing the war in Ukraine, the implementation of which has been regularly reported to the European Commission by the IWG THB.

On 21 July 2022, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted a Decision amending the Decision on the establishment of the IWG THB, appointing a new National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and increasing the size of the Working Group by two new members. The IWG THB prepared an annual report on its work for 2021, which was presented to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on 25 May 2022, and an Action Plan for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the period 2023–2024, which was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on 26 January 2023.

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 the framework of the third round of the evaluation of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, a delegation of the Council of Europe (the so-called Greta Group of Experts) visited Slovenia for several days in June 2022, where it met with all key actors working in the field of combating trafficking in human beings. On 9 November 2022, Slovenia received the Greta Group's draft report, on which the IWG THB commented, and the final report will be adopted in the first half of 2023.

In line with established practice, in 2022 the MNZ SPCTHB 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). The report notes that no convictions for trafficking in human beings were issued by the courts during the reporting year. Investigations and prosecutions of trafficking for forced labour and labour exploitation remain at a low level, and there are difficulties in identifying victims of trafficking among applicants for international protection and children. The provision of compensation to victims of trafficking is also problematic. The report also recommends that Slovenia appoint a national rapporteur for an independent review of the Government's efforts to combat trafficking in human beings and establish a special police unit to investigate trafficking in human beings.

**2 Prevention**

Prevention activities in 2022 also included various forms of awareness-raising among the general public as well as among at-risk groups of potential victims of trafficking. Systematic awareness-raising activities for children and minors in primary and secondary schools was implemented, and other established activities to raise awareness and prevent trafficking in human beings continued, including in the Roma community. In addition, the IWG THB carried out various trainings for professionals, mainly civil servants, who deal with the issue of trafficking in human beings in their work.

**2.1 Raising awareness among the wider public**

**2.1.1 EU and World Anti-Trafficking Day**

On the occasion of the European Anti-Trafficking Day, the MNZ SPCTHB, in cooperation with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (hereinafter: ICMPD) and the Network of National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-Eastern Europe (hereinafter: NATC SEE), carried out an online campaign between 18 and 21 October to raise awareness about the vulnerability to trafficking in human beings of persons fleeing the war in Ukraine. Representatives of NATC SEE also adopted a joint statement outlining key recommendations to prevent the phenomenon. On 17 October 2022, the Ministry of the Interior published a press release on its website and social media profiles, which was also shared on the websites of other institutions participating in the IWG THB.

Within the framework of the EU Anti-Trafficking Day, Caritas Slovenia cooperated with Ljubljanski potniški promet d.o.o., resulting in preventive content on the issue of human trafficking being shown on the digital displays of city buses in Ljubljana and Maribor in the period from 18 October to 2 November. The same awareness-raising activities were carried out for the general public on the occasion of the World Anti-Trafficking Day, from 29 July to 3 August 2022 and from 5 to 9 August 2022, and on the occasion of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, from 2 to 5 December 2022. Each content post was shown on 170 buses or 450 digital displays every 15 minutes and was observed by 90% of passengers.

On the occasion of the World Anti-Trafficking Day, the Ministry of the Interior published a press release on its website and social networks, warning about the use and abuse of digital technologies for criminal purposes, which are increasingly used by traffickers to obtain and control victims, and which can contribute to more effective prevention of trafficking in human beings, prosecution of perpetrators, and the identification and protection of the victims of trafficking.

On the occasion of the European and World Anti-Trafficking Day, Slovenian Caritas published a press release on its website, Facebook profile and at the Slovenian Bishops' Conference Press Office, which was also picked up by various media. The expert of the project Care for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Crisis Accommodation gave a statement to Radio Ognjišče on the occasion of the European Anti-Trafficking Day and an interview to Radio Sora and Radio Triglav on the occasion of the World Anti-Trafficking Day.

**2.1.2 Website**

In May 2022, the web administration of the central gov.si website (<https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/boj-proti-trgovini-z-ljudmi/><http://www.vlada.si/boj_proti_trgovini_z_ljudmi/>) was transferred from the Government Communications Office to the MNZ SPCTHB. The latter ensured that the content of the website in Slovenian and English was consistently updated and refreshed with the latest information and data for the current year. The MNZ SPCTHB also ensured that the content complied with the provisions of the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications Act.

**2.1.3 Media**

According to the available data, Slovenian print, electronic and online media have published dozens of articles on trafficking in human beings, with the most attention being paid to the exploitation of Ukrainian war refugees. Some media reported on the European Anti-Trafficking Day, summarising the communication of the IWG THB. The media also discussed the issue in the context of the increasing migration of abuse online, drawing attention to the increased vulnerability of victims, especially minors. Several media also reported on the visit of the Greta Group delegation to Slovenia in June 2022.

**2.1.4 Other activities**

The Association Ključ – Centre for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings once again participated in the implementation of the House of Fears project in Ljubljana, which was visited by 250 people. With the financial support of the Municipality of Ljubljana and the Foundation for the Financing of Disabled and Humanitarian Organisations in the Republic of Slovenia (FIHO), they carried out two awareness-raising events and provided information to a total of 292 people. They also participated in 15 media publications.

**2.2 Raising awareness among high-risk target groups**

* + 1. **Raising awareness among children and adolescents**
* **Activities of the MNZ SPCTHB**

In accordance with the Action Plan for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2022, in November 2021, the MNZ SPCTHB continued the systematical implementation of workshops to raise awareness among children and adolescents about the dangers of trafficking in human beings, its manifestations, appropriate action and self-protective behaviour. In accordance with the three-year work plan, divided by region, the workshops in primary schools in the Podravje, Pomurje, Savinja Valley and Koroška regions and in secondary schools in the Notranjska, South-Eastern, Posavje and Obalno-Kraška regions were implemented in the 2021/2022 school year. In the school year 2022/2023, awareness-raising is being carried out in primary schools in Gorenjska, Goriška, Zasavje and the Central Slovenia region, and in secondary schools in the Podravje, Pomurje, Savinja and Koroška regions.

In 2022, 116 workshops were implemented, 87 in primary schools and 29 in secondary schools, attended by 2129 pupils and 120 teaching staff. The analysis of the questionnaires completed after the workshop by the pupils shows that the awareness-raising objective was achieved, as almost all pupils gained new information from the workshop (98%) that would enable the majority of them to identify the phenomenon (69%).

*Table 1: Display of the workshops on trafficking in human beings in primary and secondary schools in 2022*

| ***Schools/Regions*** | ***Number of workshops*** | ***Number of pupils*** | ***Number of teaching staff*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary schools** | **87** | **1636** | **99** |
| Gorenjska region | 9 | 187 | 11 |
| Goriška region | 13 | 257 | 16 |
| Podravska region | 1 | 11 | 1 |
| Pomurska region | 11 | 170 | 12 |
| Savinjska region | 8 | 147 | 5 |
| Zasavska region | 5 | 71 | 9 |
| Central Slovenia region | 40 | 793 | 45 |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Secondary schools** | **29** | **493** | **21** |
| South-Eastern region | 14 | 213 | 6 |
| Obalno-Kraška region | 1 | 11 | 1 |
| Podravska region | 4 | 72 | 6 |
| Savinjska region | 10 | 197 | 8 |
| **Total** | **116** | **2129** | **120** |

* **Activities of non-governmental and humanitarian organisations**

Within the contract on co-financing the project Care for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Crisis Accommodation in 2022, Caritas Slovenia conducted 35 live prevention workshops, which were attended by 1021 pupils, students, teachers and parents from five statistical regions (Gorenjska, Posavska, Obalno-Kraška, Central Slovenia, Pomurska). 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.

In addition, Caritas Slovenia published 15,000 copies of a preventive material on the pitfalls of trafficking in human beings. The material was sent to all primary and secondary schools and various institutions (educational institutions, centres for blind and visually impaired youth, deaf and hard of hearing youth, boarding schools, etc.) and other institutions (the Police, social work centres, health care centres, safe houses and maternity homes). The material was also sent to participants of events where Caritas Slovenia raised awareness on the issue of trafficking in human beings (e.g. the Joyful Day of Volunteering, which took place in Prešeren Square).

The Association Ključ carried out the workshops Ključna šola for boys and girls and Telesnica to raise awareness among adolescents (pupils and students) in the municipalities of Ljubljana, Koper, Novo mesto, Ravne na Koroškem, Celje and Nova Gorica. It held 159 events in total, which were attended by 2134 people. It also delivered 19 lectures to students at the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Social Work, the Faculty of Philosophy (study course of psychology), the Faculty of Security Sciences and the Faculty of Education. 434 students attended the lectures.

**2.2.2 Preventive action in the field of raising awareness and prevention of human trafficking in the Roma community**

The Government Office for National Minorities (hereinafter: ONM) continued to strengthen its multidisciplinary approach to address harmful practices in the Roma community, such as the running away of minors to harmful environments (early marriage) and forced marriages. It chaired a working group in this area, formed for this purpose, which brought together representatives of the relevant ministries, the police, the prosecutor's office, the Centre for Education in Justice (hereinafter: CIP), the Community of Social Work Centres of Slovenia, representatives of the coordinators for the prevention of domestic violence, NGOs and representatives of the Council of the Roma Community of the Republic of Slovenia. Within the framework of the National Roma Platform project, the ONM, in cooperation with all key institutions and within the framework of the work of the working group set up for this purpose, published in 2021 a Handbook on the identification of early and forced marriages in the Roma community and on interventions in these cases (hereafter: the Handbook). It is available on the website of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and has been sent to all members of the Inter-ministerial Working Group for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and other relevant institutions and actors. It was agreed within the Working Group that the publication of the Handbook should be followed by professional trainings and consultations with practitioners in the regions or settings where the problem can be detected, and that the structure of the participants should be as multidisciplinary as possible in order to allow for an effective exchange of experience between representatives of different institutions that encounter or might encounter such phenomena in the course of their work.

In 2022, five training sessions and consultations were held with practitioners in regions or settings where this problem can be detected. The first, broader consultation took place on 21 March 2022 in Dolenjske Toplice. It was aimed at the managers of all those institutions involved in the detection of these cases and the procedures to be followed when or if a report is made. Subsequent training sessions were held in smaller groups and were aimed at the professionals of individual institutions in their local areas: on 21 April 2022 in Novo mesto, on 24 May 2022 in Krško, on 13 June 2022 in Kočevje and on 15 November 2022 in Maribor. A total of 51 representatives of social work centres, 33 representatives of schools, 34 representatives of the police, three representatives of the judiciary, four representatives of the prosecutor's office, one representative of the CIP, 22 representatives of NGOs, eight representatives or members of the Roma community, 14 representatives of other organisations or institutions (e.g. people's universities, journalists, etc.) and four representatives of the health sector attended the five training sessions. There are two things to keep in mind about these figures: 1. some of the participants attended the training several times and are therefore included in the figures several times, especially the lecturers; 2. the events were aimed at a professional public, especially representatives of key institutions in the local environment (social work centres, schools, police, health, prosecution and judiciary, as well as NGOs working in these environments). Awareness-raising activities for the Roma community will follow in 2023, hence the low number of representatives and/or members of the Roma community at these events. Despite the above, the ONM has reached a large number of representatives of key institutions through the organisation of these events and considers the trainings to have been successful and the participants very satisfied with them.

In addition, the ONM organised the so-called evaluation event in Ljubljana on 15 September 2022. The aim of the event was to assess and evaluate the expert lectures held on the topic of early and forced marriages in the Roma community, to exchange views on suggestions for improvement and next steps, and above all to reflect on the next steps to be taken to address the Roma community as effectively as possible and to raise their awareness of the harmfulness of these practices. The event was attended by representatives of the Council of the Roma Community of the Republic of Slovenia, the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the General Police Directorate, the Novo mesto Police Station, the Dolenjska and Bela krajina Social Work Centre, Community of Social Work Centres of Slovenia, Development and Education Centre Novo mesto, Lendava People's University, NGOs (Association Kralji ulice, Scientific and Research Association for Arts, Cultural and Educational Programmes and Technology, Association Loli Luludi, Association SOS Helpline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, Association Ključ).

In March 2022, the ONM established a cooperation with CIP in the field of training and awareness-raising of justice personnel on the phenomena of early and forced marriages. The Director of CIP attended introductory training on 21 March 2022, and a two-day seminar on Addressing Domestic Violence and Victims of Domestic Violence 2022 was held in Portorož on 20 and 21 June 2022, organised by CIP.The seminar also included a detailed presentation of the phenomena of early and forced marriages in the Roma community, and the Handbook was sent to all participants. On 16 September 2022, a one-hour webinar/training on the identification of early and forced marriages and intervention in such cases in the Roma community was organised by the ONM in cooperation with CIP. The ONM presented the activities carried out and planned in this field, and the lecturer Dubravka Hrovatič gave a presentation on the topic "Victims of domestic violence – women from vulnerable groups between tradition and crime". The event was attended by more than 80 participants.

In October 2022, the ONM petitioned the Expert Council for Forensic Expertise, Court Appraisal and Court Interpretation to amend the Guidelines for Forensic Expertise in the Field of Psychology and the General and Individual Expert Guidelines for the Production of Expert Opinions in the Field of Social Work by adding the Handbook on the Identification of Early and Forced Marriages in the Roma Community and on Interventions in These Cases to the list of recommended readings of both Guidelines. It also offered to provide training for forensic experts in relevant disciplines. The proposals received a positive response from the expert council, the Slovenian Chamber of Clinical Psychologists (hereafter: ZKPS) and the Slovenian Association of Psychologists (hereinafter: DPS), and the Handbook was added to the list of recommended literature by the Commission for Expertise in Family Psychology. The ZKPS and DPS have expressed their interest in participating in professional training in the above-mentioned issues and their willingness to actively participate in the training courses to be organised by the ONM on this topic in 2023.

**2.2.3 Information for other vulnerable groups**

In 2022, the IWG THB paid special attention to raising awareness among Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Slovenia about the pitfalls and dangers of trafficking in human beings. To this end, various prevention materials (posters, brochures, social media advertisements) were prepared in Slovenian, English and Ukrainian and sent to all key public institutions, NGOs and humanitarian organisations.

Association Ključ carried out 62 individual and group counselling activities for people from Ukraine, which were attended by 101 people. The activities were co-financed by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (hereinafter: MDDSZ) and the NGO Legal Information Centre with funding from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They also carried out seven joint information sessions for 140 persons in the accommodation capacities of the Asylum Home in Logatec, Debeli Rtič and Novo mesto. In addition, 34 information sessions were held for employees in sectors at risk (transport, petrol stations, catering, agriculture, construction), attended by 1056 people.

On 11 March 2022, based on the information provided by the International Caritas Network and Caritas of Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania and Moldova on criminal gangs related to trafficking in human beings on both sides of the border with Ukraine, the Caritas Slovenia issued the press release, "Large numbers of refugees increase the risk of labour exploitation and trafficking in human beings!"[[1]](#footnote-1). The message was sent electronically to more than 300 parish Caritas e-mail addresses, 500 media and journalists' addresses and to 1900 tutors of various Caritas workshops in primary schools. In addition, in cooperation with the MNZ SPCTHB, it prepared a reprint of the pocket leaflet on trafficking in human beings, which was published in 2016 in six languages, with the addition of a text in Ukrainian. The updated leaflet was sent to various addresses of parish Caritas and other institutions within the Caritas network.

On 24 March 2022, a video training for parish Caritas provided important information on the accommodation of refugees in private accommodation, the presentation of the Decree on the methods for ensuring rights of persons enjoying temporary protection and the way to regulate the status and applications for various forms of assistance for refugees from Ukraine. The training also provided a more detailed presentation on the issue of trafficking in human beings and the potential risks involved. The training was attended by more than 70 representatives of local Caritas and other NGOs.

**2.3 Raising the awareness and training of the expert public**

The Criminal Police Directorate at the General Police Directorate (hereinafter: GPU UKP) constantly educates and trains both 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.

From 12 to 14 September 2022, training of criminal investigators from the Regional Criminal Police Sectors (hereinafter: SKP PU) dealing with the investigation of trafficking in human beings took place. The training was attended by 60 criminal investigators from all regional SKP PU and GPU UKP, as well as prosecutors from the Specialised State Prosecutor’s Office, staff of the MNZ SPCTHB and representatives of the Association Ključ and Caritas Slovenia, who presented the role of NGOs in the process of providing assistance and protection to victims of trafficking. A total of 90 people attended the training.

The GPU UKP, in cooperation with the MNZ SPCTHB and the Ključ Association, conducted four training sessions for police officers in the field of combatting trafficking in human beings in September 2022 (16, 27 and 29 September 2022). 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.

In addition, GPU UKP, in cooperation with the Association Ključ, conducted four training sessions for police officers, criminal investigators and assistant chiefs of police stations. The trainings took place on 10, 18 and 25 November and 2 December 2022 and were attended by 113 police officers and criminal investigators from all police administrations.

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. On 30 May 2022, a lecture for eight consular officers was organised by the MNZ SPCTHB.

On 27 October 2022, 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: MDDSZ), the Social Chamber of Slovenia held a seminar for professionals and expert assistants of Social Work Centres focused on the work with victims of trafficking in human beings. The first part of the seminar was dedicated to refreshing knowledge on the issue of trafficking in human beings and the system of assistance for victims of trafficking in human beings in the Republic of Slovenia and to presenting the project Pogum (Courage). The project, which is implemented by the Association Ključ with the financial support of the MDDSZ, is aimed at all women, men and children who had to leave Ukraine because of the war and are potential targets of organised criminal groups due to their vulnerability. The project aims to alert them to the susceptibility of potentially exploitative relationships, to build more lasting trusting relationships between members of the groups, to facilitate the processing of the trauma experienced and to help them to overcome the loss of loved ones. The second part of the seminar focused on the specificities of labour exploitation and forced labour. The seminar was attended by 52 participants.

On 21 November 2022, the Directorate for Migration of the Ministry of the Interior held an expert consultation on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings: Detection, Prevention and Protection of Victims. The consultation was aimed at legal representatives of unaccompanied minors, representatives of social work centres and crisis centres, as well as officials of the MNZ and the Police, and focused on vulnerable groups. The event was attended by 67 people.

On 6 May 2022, a training for IRSD inspectors took place in Kranjska Gora, during which the MNZ SPCTHB presented the Guidelines for labour inspectors – identification of victims of trafficking in human beings. The training was attended by 103 IRSD employees.

The employees of the Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants (hereinafter: UOIM) regularly attend various trainings on trafficking in human beings. In the reporting year, they attended the expert conference Combating trafficking in human beings: Detection, Prevention and Protection of Victims, the final conference of the project Unheard Cries of Lost/Stolen Children and other events related to trafficking in human beings.

On 20 October 2022, MNZ SPCTHB delivered a keynote lecture on trafficking in human beings in Slovenia and worldwide to six senior Ministry of Defence officials. In line with the objectives of the new Action Plan for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the period 2023–2024, such training will be systematically provided in the future to all members of the Slovenian Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence personnel deployed on a peacekeeping operation or mission abroad.

In addition, 120 teaching staff were made aware of the subject by the MNZ SPCTHB in the framework of the preventive activities under point 2.2.1.

In 2022, the Association Ključ conducted 28 training sessions for the professional public, attended by 801 people.

**3 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 chapter 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.

**3.1 Police activities**

The situation in the combat against trafficking in human beings continues from previous years. Slovenia continues to be a destination and transit country for victims of trafficking, who are most often exploited for prostitution and sexual abuse. Other forms of exploitation of victims are less frequent.

The perception of issues related to the exploitation of victims of trafficking in human beings 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.

* + 1. **Trafficking in human beings pursuant to Article 113 of the Criminal Code (KZ-1)[[2]](#footnote-2)**

In 2022, the police dealt with six trafficking in human beings offences, which shows a decrease in the number of offences dealt with compared to 2021 (42).

It also addressed eight cases in which there were reasons for suspicion that a criminal offence of trafficking in human beings had been committed, but the information and evidence gathered did not provide a sufficient basis on which to file criminal complaints (three in 2021). 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 2: Number of addressed crimes of trafficking in human beings in the period 2018–2022*

| **Trafficking in human beings** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criminal complaint | 71 | 13 | 29 | 42 | 6 |
| Report | 6 | 14 | 8 | 3 | 8 |

In 2022, the police dealt with a total of five victims of trafficking in human beings and 14 potential[[3]](#footnote-3) victims of trafficking in human beings. The victims were women from Colombia, Venezuela and Slovenia, who were exploited for prostitution and other forms of sexual abuse, as well as for forced marriage.

*Table 3: Number of identified victims of trafficking in human beings in 2022 by sex and nationality*

| **Nationality** | **Male** | **Female** | **Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slovenia | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Colombia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Venezuela | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| **Total** | **0** | **5** | **5** |

*Table 4: Number of identified victims of trafficking in human beings in 2022 by sex and form of exploitation*

| **Form of exploitation** | **Male** | **Female** | **Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sexual exploitation | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Forced marriage | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| **Total** | **0** | **5** | **5** |

*Table 5: Number of potential victims of trafficking in human beings in 2022 by sex and nationality*

| **Nationality** | **Male** | **Female** | **Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| India | 9 | 0 | 9 |
| China | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Kosovo | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Ukraine | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Albania | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Uganda | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| **Total** | **12** | **2** | **14** |

A total of 25 people, 14 men and 11 women, were dealt with by the police on suspicion of having committed the offence of trafficking in human beings. The majority of them were Slovenian citizens.

*Table 6: Number of suspects dealt with for the offence of trafficking in human beings in 2022, by sex and nationality*

| **Nationality** | **Male** | **Female** | **Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slovenia | 14 | 8 | 22 |
| Serbia | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| **Total** | **14** | **11** | **25** |

* + 1. **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.

1. **Exploitation through prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1**

In 2022, the police dealt with four offences of exploitation through prostitution, which shows a decrease in the number of offences dealt with compared to 2021 (19). It also addressed two cases in which reasons for suspicion were determined that a criminal offence of exploitation through prostitution had been committed, whereby there were no bases on which to file criminal complaints. In this respect, reports were submitted to the competent prosecutor's offices pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Article 148 of the Criminal Procedure Act.

*Table 7: Number of addressed crimes of exploitation through prostitution in the period 2018–2022*

| **Exploitation through prostitution** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criminal complaint | 24 | 6 | 1 | 19 | 4 |
| Report | 4 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 2 |

In 2022, three people were dealt with as victims of this crime – Croatian, Slovenian and Serbian nationals.

*Table 8: Number of identified victims of exploitation through prostitution in 2022 by sex and nationality*

| **Nationality** | **Male** | **Female** | **Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slovenia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Croatia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Serbia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| **Total** | **0** | **3** | **3** |

A total of four citizens of Slovenia, two men and two women, were dealt with by the police on suspicion of having committed the offence of exploitation through prostitution.

*Table 9: Number of suspects dealt with for the offence of exploitation through prostitution in 2022, by sex and nationality*

| **Nationality** | **Male** | **Female** | **Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slovenia | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| **Total** | **2** | **2** | **4** |

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

In 2022, the police addressed 1844 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. The number of offences dealt with has increased significantly compared to 2021 (1357). The majority of victims and suspects were Slovenian citizens. 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 10: Number of victims of criminal offence of violation of fundamental workers’ rights identified in 2022, by sex and nationality*

| **Nationality** | **Male** | **Female** | **Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slovenia | 319 | 210 | 529 |
| Bulgaria | 73 | 1 | 74 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 485 | 15 | 500 |
| Montenegro | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Croatia | 31 | 6 | 37 |
| Iran | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| DR Congo | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Kosovo | 141 | 4 | 145 |
| Hungary | 13 | 2 | 15 |
| Germany | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Netherlands | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| Romania | 56 | 0 | 56 |
| Russia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| North Macedonia | 32 | 2 | 34 |
| Slovakia | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Serbia | 54 | 7 | 61 |
| **Total** | **1225** | **250** | **1475** |

*Table 11: Number of suspects dealt with for the offence of violation of fundamental workers’ rights identified in 2022, by sex and nationality*

| **Nationality** | **Male** | **Female** | **Total** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slovenia | 746 | 381 | 1127 |
| Austria | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 229 | 2 | 231 |
| Montenegro | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Kosovo | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Germany | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| North Macedonia | 354 | 1 | 355 |
| Serbia | 113 | 0 | 113 |
| Croatia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Italy | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Ukraine | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| **Total** | **1457** | **387** | **1844** |

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

**3.2 The Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia and district state prosecutors' offices**

The Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: SDT RS, which is exclusively competent to prosecute criminal offences related to human trafficking, actively performed its function in 2022 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.

**3.2.1 Criminal offence of trafficking in human beings (Article 113 of the KZ-1)** [[4]](#footnote-4)

The following was received and addressed by the SDT RS in the reporting period:

* four indictments due to criminal offences of trafficking in human beings as per Article 113 of KZ-1, namely against nine natural persons and one legal entity and to the detriment of five victims, three women and two men;
* one report under Paragraph 10 of Article 148 of the ZKP against one natural person.

The prosecutors of the SDT RS have taken the following decisions on the criminal charges:

* one dismissal decision was issued against one natural person for an offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1;
* one dismissal decision was issued against one legal entity for an offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1;
* two requests for investigation were filed against six natural persons for an offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1, committed to the detriment of two female victims.

Individual cases in the field of human trafficking were also addressed by the district state prosecutor's offices, specifically:

* the District State Prosecutor's Office in Kranj received one criminal complaint for reasonable suspicion of the offence of trafficking in human beings under Article 113 of the KZ-1 and issued one dismissal decision for the offence of trafficking in human beings under Article 113 of the KZ-1, against one natural person to the detriment of one person (female).

The lower number of cases dealt with than in previous years may be attributed to the fact that the reporting period was still partly affected by the epidemic of COVID-19 and the various related restrictive measures. These, in addition to life and everyday circumstances, also had an impact on judicial, administrative and other public law cases or proceedings, and thus on the work of law enforcement authorities.

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. For this reason, court proceedings also take a long time, especially the main hearing, which can take several years.

*Table 12: Criminal proceedings and sanctions for perpetrators of the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings in 2022*

| **Criminalisation of trafficking in human beings** |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of investigations launched | 2 |
| Number of indictments | 0 |
| Number of convictions for the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings | 0 |
| Number of convictions due to the use of services of a victim of trafficking in human beings | 0 |

**Court decisions**

At the time of reporting, the following numbers of cases are at different stages of the courts' proceedings:

* five cases are currently in the judicial investigation phase;
* three indictments have become final: two for an offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1 and one for an offence under Article 175 of the KZ-1;
* one case for an offence under Articles 113 and 175 of the KZ-1 is awaiting retrial;
* two cases are at the main hearing stage, one for an offence under Article 175 of the KZ-1 and one for an offence under Articles 113 175 of the KZ-1;
* one case resulted in an acquittal for an offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1.

The Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia ruled on:

* two cases for an offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1; and
* one case for an offence under Article 175 of the KZ-1,

but its decisions did not affect the existing case law.

In the cases dealt with by the SDT RS during the reporting year, the court decided on appeals in two cases in which no judicial investigation was initially initiated, specifically the investigating judge:

* in one case, initially dismissed a request for an investigation made in respect of a significant number of offences involving 12 accused persons to the detriment of 56 victims. The investigating judge's decision was appealed by the public prosecutor and a petition for legality protection was lodged, and in December 2022 the out-of-hearing panel upheld the public prosecutor's appeal and annulled the decision in question;
* in the second case, dismissed a request for an investigation into offences committed by three persons against one victim. The investigating judge's decision was appealed by the public prosecutor, and in September 2022 the High Court upheld the public prosecutor's appeal and initiated an investigation.

In the reporting year, one case was therefore concluded in the court of first instance, with the court acquitting one case for an offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1.

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

In addition to the cases addressed by the SDT RS already mentioned in the previous section, the following cases were addressed by the District Public Prosecutors' Offices during the reporting year:

* The District State Prosecutor's Office in Maribor received one report under Paragraph 10 of Article 148 of the ZKP 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) and issued one order dismissing the case.
* The District State Prosecutor's Office in Celje filed one indictment for the offence of exploitation through prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1, against one natural person to the detriment of six victims (female).

**3.2.3 Findings of the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia**

Trafficking in human beings is a serious crime that occurs all over the world and is a serious problem in Europe. Preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings is therefore becoming a priority for the European Union and its Member States.

Usually, trafficking in human beings is an international organised criminal activity involving many people over a long time period, which makes detection and providing evidence of these criminal offences difficult, time-consuming and complex. Identifying and dealing with trafficking in human beings requires a great deal of specific knowledge, listening and understanding, of which offenders are often well aware and thus are increasingly willing to accept the risk of prosecution. They see victims only as a means to financial gain and are willing to uncompromisingly exploit an individual's vulnerability or a personal characteristic. The most common forms of vulnerability of victims are unemployment, poor job prospects, poor educational level, extremely low earnings, indebtedness, obligation to support minor children, disabled or unemployed partners, obligation to support extended family, serious illness in the family, personal simplicity and state of war. The essence of trafficking in human beings is thus 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 perpetrators take 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.

As online recruitment of victims is increasingly being detected across the EU, the EU has mandated Member States to take measures to prevent the use of new technologies as recruitment tools for victims of trafficking in human beings, which will also have a clear impact on the investigation and the way in which evidence is gathered. There is also a continuing trend towards the refinement of the forms of the offence, which makes it more difficult to prove the offence in question, hence the need to use covert investigative measures and new technologies in such cases. As this often involves international organised criminal activity, international cooperation between investigative and judicial authorities is essential to obtain evidence. It is also very important that financial investigations are carried out at the same time as criminal proceedings in order to confiscate 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. The SDT has therefore repeatedly suggested that judges should be given better and more active training in this area, including with examples from abroad. Furthermore, some specialisation in this area would be necessary, as knowledge of the combat against trafficking in human beings requires a great deal of specific knowledge and understanding.

**3.3 Activities of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia**

In 2022, 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: ZDR-1) and the Transnational Provision of Services Act (hereinafter: ZČmIS).

In 2022, 27 breaches of the ZZSDT were detected (28 in 2021). The most violations (18) 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 a 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 two 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. Inspectors also found one infringement of Article 36, 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 as specified in a list of cases. One infringement of Paragraph 1 of Article 31 of the ZZSDT was also found, which stipulates that the employer or the contracting authority must return the seasonal work permit to the institution if it does not conclude an employment contract or a civil law contract with the foreigner for any reason, or if the employment contract or the civil law contract is terminated before the expiry of the validity period of the seasonal work permit, within 15 days from the date of delivery of the seasonal work permit, if the foreigner does not take up employment or work, or within three working days from the date of termination of the employment or other contractual relationship with the foreigner. The inspectors also found four 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.

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 five violations in 2022, which is significantly fewer than in the previous reporting period (10). Thus, four infringements of Article 12 of the ZČmIS, which sets the conditions for the cross-border provision of services by foreign employers in the Republic of Slovenia, were found, and one infringement was found due to non-compliance with the provision of Article 14 of the ZČmIS, because the foreign employer did not register with the Employment Service of Slovenia prior to the commencement of the cross-border provision of services, or because the foreign employer did not keep and submit at the request of the supervisory authority, the documentation referred to in the law, at the time of the cross-border provision of services in Slovenia.

In 2022, 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. 115 infringements of Article 209 of the ZDR-1, which defines the mandatory elements of employment contracts for workers posted abroad by their employers and 2 infringements of Article 210 of the ZDR-1, which specifically regulates the position of foreign posted workers, were detected.

In 2022, the EU placed a strong emphasis on the employment of citizens of the Republic of Ukraine in EU countries, which is why the IRSD inspected two companies employing citizens of the Republic of Ukraine during the reporting year. In doing so, it found:

– in the first case, violations of Article 134 of the ZDR-1 were found, as the employer failed to pay wages within the legal deadline;

– in the second case, the employer was found to have employed five female workers, citizens of the Republic of Ukraine, who had valid "persons with temporary protection" cards. All the workers had fixed-term employment contracts for part-time work of 10 hours per week. All the workers had been working in Germany as cleaners since the first day of their employment. It is established that the employer posted the workers to Germany, but the HIIS records show that he did not obtain an A1 certificate for them, which would have enabled the workers in Germany to prove that they were covered by social insurance in Slovenia at the time of their posting. It was also found that the employer is not registered in the Register of domestic legal and natural persons for the provision of workers to the user and therefore does not have as its main activity the provision of a temporary labour force. In the light of the findings, it was suspected that the workers in question were working illegally in Germany, without A1 certificates, or that they were illegally supplying labour. The IRSD informed the competent German authority of the findings via the Internal Market Information System (IMI) and made a proposal for surveillance.

The IRSD notes that employers are increasingly recruiting workers from certain Asian countries (India, Bangladesh, etc.) to replace workers from the countries of the former Yugoslavia as a labour force. In 2022, a case of a labour brokerage agency established in Portugal, which sent Indian workers to Slovenia to work for a user who did not have a licence to carry out this activity in the Republic of Slovenia, nor was registered in the register of foreign legal and natural persons for the provision of workers to the user, was dealt with. The user was subject to an infringement procedure for violation of Paragraph 2 of Article 166 of the Labour Market Regulation Act.

The IRSD also carried out inspections of four nightclubs in 2022 in order to identify victims of trafficking in human beings exploited in forced labour and other forms of exploitation, but no breaches of labour law were found.

**3.4 Activities of the Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia**

In 2022, FURS also dealt with infringements of the Prevention of Undeclared Work and Employment Act (hereinafter: ZPDZC-1) and filed charges or reports for offences under the KZ-1.

In 2022, FURS implemented 10,875 controls on illegal employment, including on the employment of third-country nationals. Illegal employment of third-country nationals was detected in 66 employers (44 in 2021). The most frequent irregularities due to illegal employment of third-country nationals were found in the construction (F), catering (I) and processing (C) sectors.

In 2022, 58 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 51 minor offence proceedings were concluded in the reporting year. In 2022, 51 offenders were fined a total of EUR 287,500 for illegally employing third-country nationals, and six warnings were issued. 62 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 27,000 for committing an offence under Paragraph 3 of Article 23 of the ZPDZC-1, and eight warnings were issued.

In 2022, FURS filed 15 criminal complaints and two reports of suspected offences under Article 196 of the KZ-1 (violation of fundamental rights of workers). Of these, ten concerned foreign nationals, nine of which were criminal charges against foreign nationals only, and one against both Slovenian and foreign nationals. In the reporting year, FURS filed five criminal charges and two reports for suspicion of committing an offence under Paragraph 1 of Article 199 of the KZ-1 (undeclared employment).

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

**4 Assistance and protection of victims of human trafficking**

The assistance to the victims of trafficking in human beings was provided within the framework of various 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 project for the identification and information of victims of trafficking in human beings and/or sexual violence in the procedures for recognition of international protection in Slovenia (PATS) and the project for the support of persons in prostitution and those leaving it continued to be implemented during the reporting year.

**4.1 "Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Slovenia – Crisis Accommodation" programme**

The MDDSZ co-financed the "Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Slovenia – Crisis Accommodation" programme in 2022 and 2023, 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 a harmful environment.

In 2022, nine people were placed in crisis accommodation, specifically:

* six women (one each from Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal and Germany, and two from Venezuela);
* three minors (children of two identified victims of trafficking, two Portuguese and one Spanish national).

All 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 of the Criminal Code and were accommodated in the crisis accommodation for a total of 91 care days.

The persons in crisis accommodation are 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.

In 2022, two additional professionals were involved in care, as the extreme complexity of the cases required, among other things, the involvement of experts in the fields of addiction, violence and mental health. Moreover, the additional workers had to be involved due to staff shortages, as lay workers could only actively participate in the project in operational tasks for various reasons, including the traumatic experiences of those placed. The involvement of volunteers was also limited for various reasons (health reasons, fear of infection with the COVID-19 virus, rejection of socialising by the placed person, etc.).

During the year, the project expert received information from the Police contact person on the possible placements of 17 potential victims. In two cases, the Caritas Slovenia conducted informative interviews with potential victims in accordance with Paragraph 6 of Chapter III of the Handbook on Identification, Assistance and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings.

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 based on the number of placements realised, and costs of prevention workshops) amounted to EUR 45,000 in 2022.

**4.2 "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 2022–2023, financed by the Ministry of the Interior, was implemented by the Association Ključ in the reporting year.

Nine persons were included in the safe accommodation programme in 2022 (same data as in 4.1). A total of 560 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 44,032.51 in 2022.

**4.3 "Reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings" project**

In 2022, the Association Ključ also implemented the "Reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings" project, which was financially supported by the Ministry of the Interior – the Police.

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 2022, eight people were included in the programme: one Malagasy national, one Colombian national, five Slovenian nationals and one Ukrainian national. All persons were of legal age. They were provided with the necessary psychosocial support, assistance and support with paperwork, studying, job search, accompaniment to institutions and involvement in individual and group counselling activities.

**4.4 "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. 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. In the event of suspicion that a person is a potential victim of trafficking in human beings, the UOIM informs the competent institutions.

In 2022, interviews were conducted by social workers trained by the Association Ključ. They conducted 39 in-depth individual interviews aimed at raising awareness of trafficking in human beings. The social services provide information on trafficking in human beings in each individual interview, regardless of the original purpose of the interview. Given the number of arbitrary departures within a very short period of time after placement, most of the information on trafficking in human beings is provided in a shortened form at the time of placement itself.

Association Ključ also carried out activities aimed at providing information on trafficking in human beings in accommodation facilities where persons from Ukraine are accommodated (for more information see section 2.2.3).

In the context of identifying cases of trafficking in human beings in the procedures for addressing cases of sexual and gender-based violence, the document Standard Operating Procedures for the Prevention of and Action in Cases of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Persons Handled under the Provisions of the International Protection Act was signed in February 2020. These procedures enable persons experiencing sexual and gender-based violence to ensure their safety, prevent escalation of violence, reduce and eliminate the impact of violence and be empowered. In 2022, 9 meetings were convened for a total of 15 cases, involving 10 persons (3 unaccompanied minors, 5 single women and 2 single men) and 3 cases involving families. The most frequent cases of sexual violence, domestic violence and family separation led to treatment, and the most frequent measures taken by the expert group were referral to an NGO programme, PATS interview, psychosocial support for the applicant and various referrals within the health system (psychiatrist, paediatrician, etc.).

**4.5 "Support to persons in prostitution and those leaving it" project**

The Ministry of Health also 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 2022. 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. People were involved in continuous individual and group counselling activities.

In 2022, 11 persons were included in the programme implemented by the Association Ključ, specifically seven adult women (six Slovenian and one BiH citizen), one under-age girl (a citizen of Ukraine) and three adult men (two Slovenian and one Ukrainian citizen).

**5 International activities and partnerships**

As trafficking in human beings is most often an international organised criminal activity, international cooperation, especially with the countries of origin of the victims of human trafficking, is very important to effectively combat this phenomenon. The IWG THB also pays particular attention to cooperation within international organisations that help participating countries develop and implement effective policies to combat trafficking in human beings.

**5.1 International activities**

In 2022, members of the IWG THB participated intensively in various international events related to activities to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings.

**5.1.1 The national coordinator for combatting trafficking in human beings and MNZ SPCTHB**

The 22nd OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Human Beings Conference took place in Vienna from 4 to 6 April 2022, focusing on the protection and assistance of victims of trafficking, with an emphasis on the use of a victim-centred approach. In order to identify good practices, participants discussed existing victim protection systems and the standards and types of assistance in each country. Effective protection of victims of trafficking in human beings must be based on the principle of non-discrimination and non-punishment, ensure equal treatment of domestic and foreign victims and not be conditional on the victim's participation in criminal proceedings. Assistance must be tailored to the needs and specific vulnerabilities of the individual, and countries must also work towards establishing a system of permanent assistance for victims as part of the solution to their full recovery and (re)integration. One of the panels paid particular attention to the issue of child exploitation and the protection of trafficked minors.

On 16 and 17 May 2022, the EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms against trafficking in human beings (hereafter: NREM EU) meeting took place in Brussels, and the discussion focused on the evaluation of Directive 2011/36 as foreseen in the EU Anti-Trafficking Strategy 2021–2025. The first day of the meeting focused on the implementation of the commitments of the EU Joint Plan to address the risks of trafficking in human beings and support potential victims among those fleeing the war in Ukraine. The criminalisation of the use of services provided by victims of trafficking and sanctions for trafficking offences were also discussed in the light of the proposal to reform Directive 2011/36. On the second day of the meeting, a joint meeting was held with representatives of civil society, who participated via a videoconference. Following the presentation of the EU Joint Plan to address the risks of trafficking in human beings and support potential victims among those fleeing the war in Ukraine, a panel discussion was held on the digital dimension of trafficking in human beings. The second part of the panel discussion focused on the prevention and detection of forced labour. The newly created European Labour Authority (ELA) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), among others, presented their work in this area.

On 2 June 2022, a meeting of the NATC SEE network was held in Budva, co-organised by the MNZ SPCTHB in cooperation with ICMPD (International Centre for Migration Policy Development), MARRI (Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative) and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Montenegro. The Ukraine crisis has brought a number of new challenges to countries in the region, including the risk of human trafficking among those fleeing the war in Ukraine. The National Coordinators therefore discussed measures to effectively prevent this phenomenon among this vulnerable group and agreed to launch a joint online prevention campaign on the occasion of the European Anti-Trafficking Day (see section 2.1.1 for more details).

A visit by the Greta team of experts took place in Slovenia from 6 to 9 June 2022. During the visit, the delegation met with representatives of relevant ministries, government departments, the judiciary, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia and its working bodies. The Greta delegation also held separate meetings with representatives of NGOs and the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia, and visited the Asylum Home in Ljubljana, the Student Dormitory in Postojna and the Children's House (Barnahus).

On 13 and 14 June 2022, the regular annual meeting of the National Coordinators for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings, organised by the OSCE and the Council of Europe, took place, attended by representatives of the MNZ SPCTHB via a videoconference. Discussions focused on the importance of developing policies to combat the online dimension of trafficking in human beings, the risks arising from the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and capacity-building measures to combat trafficking in human beings at the national level.

On 26 and 27 October 2022, the regular meeting of the NREM EU with civil society organisations took place in Brussels. Discussions focused on the implementation of the EU Joint Plan to address the risks of trafficking in persons fleeing the war in Ukraine, cooperation between state authorities and civil society, and activities to mark the European Anti-Trafficking Day.

**5.1.2 The 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. The police also participated in the EU policy cycle on tackling 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 2022.

**Participation in JAD 2022 (Joint Action Days) activities**

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

From 15 to 21 June 2022, they participated in the implementation of EU Member States' joint activities on the 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 activities at the border crossings for international traffic and at the border crossing for air traffic at Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport but did not identify any victims of human trafficking.

From 24 to 30 October 2022, the police participated in the implementation of EU Member States' joint activities on the prevention of forced crimes 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.

On 6 September 2022, the police participated in the implementation of EU Member States' activities on online platforms and websites offering sexual favours and recruiting victims for sexual exploitation by criminal gangs. 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, using social networks, websites and the dark web in the field of trafficking in human beings. The activities were carried out at the Dutch Police Academy, with the participation of 85 experts from foreign security authorities.

* + 1. **IRSD**

In March 2022, two IRSD representatives participated in a high-level video meeting on Zero Tolerance for Child and Adult Forced Labour, which took place among the six member countries of the 8.7 Alliance. In preparation for the implementation of the JAD 2022 activities, the IRSD representative attended a video meeting of the ELA Inspectors Working Group in March and several preparatory meetings for JAD 2022 from April to June.

In May 2022, a meeting of representatives of inspectorates and police forces of EU Member States on labour exploitation took place in Madrid in the framework of EMPACT. A representative of the IRSD and a representative of the Police made a presentation of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia and cooperation with state and other authorities. In June 2022, two IRSD representatives attended a training on Soft Skills for Communication with Potential Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings in Bratislava.

Within the framework of the European action JAD 2022, which took place from 15 to 21 June 2022 in the field of prevention of forced labour, the implementation of labour legislation and legislation on occupational safety and health for employers engaged in construction activities and those employing foreigners was monitored. The IRSD also cooperated with the Netherlands Labour Authority, in the inspection of companies employing foreigners. As part of the above-mentioned action, the IRSD issued two criminal reports under Paragraph 5 of Article 308 of the KZ against two legal persons employing foreign nationals and posting them to EU Member States.

**5.1.4 FURS**

In 2022, FURS participated in the Joint European Action against Trafficking in Human Beings JAD 2022, in the framework of which 67 controls were implemented in the construction and road transport sectors. The control involved 12 mobile unit staff, who found one violation of the Road Transport Act (ZPCP-2) and one violation of the Act Regulating the Working Time and Compulsory Rest Periods of Mobile Workers (ZDCOPMD).

**5.2 Partnerships and research**

Partnerships between organisations engaged in preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings have been established in Slovenia for several 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 close 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 2022 as well. Active cooperation also took place this year in the training of professionals who encounter trafficking in human beings in the course of their work.

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 2022, 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**

After a period marked mainly by the circumstances of the COVID-19 epidemic, the work of the IWG THB returned to its original framework of activities in 2022. All key activities in the area of preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings were implemented in line with the Action Plan for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the 2021-2022 Period.

In the area of legislation and policies the most significant was the adoption of the amendment to the Criminal Code (KZ-1J), which, among other things, transposes the provisions of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims.In the framework of the third round of the evaluation of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, a delegation of the Council of Europe (the so-called Greta Group of Experts) visited Slovenia for several days in June 2022, and it met with all key actors working in the field of combating trafficking in human beings. The IWG THB 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 2023–2024.

In 2022, prevention activities were implemented on a larger scale than in recent years, particularly in the area of awareness-raising among vulnerable groups, children, minors and those fleeing the war in Ukraine. Regular annual training sessions were also held for civil servants whose work is related to trafficking in human beings.

In the area of detection, investigation and prosecution of criminal offences related to trafficking in human beings, it is noted that the exploitation of trafficked persons for sexual abuse is still prevalent in Slovenia. In 2022, the police dealt with 25 suspects for six trafficking offences and identified five victims and 14 potential 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 SDT RS submitted two requests for investigation for the crime of trafficking in human beings, but did not file any indictments for this crime. In 2022, there were no convictions in this area.

Assistance and protection of victims of trafficking in human beings was also provided in 2022 by the Caritas Slovenia and the Association Ključ , within the framework of projects co-financed by the MNZ and the MDDSZ. Nine people were placed in crisis accommodation during the reporting year and were subsequently included in the safe accommodation programme. Eight persons were included in the reintegration programme. The project to support persons in prostitution and those leaving it continued, 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 area of international cooperation and partnerships, the IWG THB members participated in a number of events and conferences, most of which had already been implemented live in 2022. The National Coordinator and the MNZ SPCTHB attended regular meetings of the National Coordinators for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings within the framework of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the NATC SEE and NREM EU networks. Moreover, Slovenia actively participated in three European Joint Actions on Trafficking in Human Beings (EMPACT THB). Exemplary cooperation between state authorities and civil society organisations working in the field of preventing and combatting human trafficking continued.

1. Available at: <https://www.karitas.si/veliko-stevilo-beguncev-povecuje-tveganje-za-delovno-izkoriscanje-in-trgovino-z-ljudmi> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The person was considered a victim of the crime of trafficking in human beings, and during the pre-trial proceedings the police found that there were no grounds for filing a criminal complaint and therefore filed a report with the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Slovenia (148/10 ZKP). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 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. It is also possible that, at the time of reporting, the prosecutor's decision in a particular case has not yet been taken against all the accused persons. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)