**TASK FORCE ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS, PROTECTION WORKING GROUP**

**24.5.2022, 10:00**

**Hotel Park Inn**

**Attendees:**

In person:

Bulent Peker (UNHCR), Lyudmyla Dobrovolska (WHO), Daniel Arbet (SHR), Scarlet Ondrejčáková (Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society – OPDCS), Michelle Fong (UNHCR), Amin Reza Koohestani (UNHCR), Hayk Khemchyan (UNICEF), Zuzana Neupauer (UNICEF), Aziz Rahjo (UNHCR), Ľudmila Hajtolová (Slovak Catholic Charity – Caritas), Monika Hlavičková (Association of Town and Cities of Slovakia – ZMOS), Aimina (UNICEF), Zuzana Kapralová (General Prosecutor’s Office), Katarína Kožuchová – (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR - MESRS), Ines Cerovič (UNICEF), Soňa Grauzlová (Information Centre on fight against the trafficking in human beings and crime prevention - ICFTHBCP), Vladimir Slama (IOM), Simona Mészárosová (IOM)

Online:

Alexandra Malangone (Human Rights League – HRL), Katarína Medlová (Slovak National Centre for Human Rights – SNCHR), Tomáš Koňuch (TENENET NGO), Barbora Maraková (UNHCR), Marek Jakab (SK8), Lara Kurtek (IUVENTA), Peter Halás, Petra Blažejová (Migration Office), Igor Pacolak (Ministry of Foreign Affairs – MFA), Ramazan Cebe (UNHCR), June Munala (UNHCR), Miroslava Mošonová (National Labour Inspectorate – NLI), Ľubica Bizíková , Eva Sviteková (VUDPAP), Lucia Kolpaková (UNHCR)

**Bulent Peker** (UNHCR) opened the meeting with some practical information and general housekeeping.

**Vladimír Slama** (IOM) thanked participants for finding time to attend the meeting and welcomed everyone within the TiP topic. Today’s meeting is the first meeting of this task force within the protection working group. As we have been approached by colleagues with a question on the difference between the two existing working groups on THB– this one and the MOI‘s expert group on trafficking under the Crime prevention department, we would like to clarify the difference. This meeting is organized in cooperation with UNHCR and other UN agencies, and it is focused foremost on the activities in relations to the situation in Ukraine and the specifically vulnerable situation of Ukrainian refugee. It will touch upon the short-term, mid-term as well as long-term activities planned in Slovakia in connection to the refugees from Ukraine. He invited participants for an introductory tour de table (attendees – see beginning of this document).

**Vladimír Slama (IOM)** – Thanked participants for introduction and invited them to further elaborate on the activities they are currently implementing within this topic as well as rough estimates of statistical data relevant for the situation in Slovakia.

**UNICEF** – provided basic overview of their activities being focused on capacity building (i.e. training of 200 border police officers in Vyšné Nemecké and several other districts on the topic of child trafficking and child sensitive communication, several trainings with INTERPOL and 2 Swedish investigators, social workers and first respond officers of labour office as well as NGOs present at the borders). These trainings are continuing in a variable settings also in the future. UNICEF was also approached by the district mayors of Bratislava and people who know the field in Bratislava and potential problems leading to trafficking in order to offer trainings to the city police representatives and social workers of all the districts in Bratislava.

**Scarlet Ondrejčáková (OPDCS)** – explained that the OPDCS is trying to address the current situation by close cooperation with NGO sector, connecting civil society organizations with state institutions and seeking for best alternatives for cooperation and financial support. OPDCS does not deal with TiP specifically but collects the qualitative and quantitative data about the activities of the NGOs (how many volunteers they have trained, what types of activities they carry out, etc.). They are focusing on continuation of EU CARE project to ensure that at least a part of the activities would be covered long term and sustainably, as public donations and fundraising is not a viable way of supporting these activities. Their project has strict rules under the EU funds framework however during this meeting they would like to observe and make sure if they included all the possible activities and professions into it. The plenipotentiary communicates the work of NGOs also with the high Slovak government representatives. The importance of civil society organization is being recognized by everyone however it is also necessary to bring some tangible results.

**Daniel Arbet (SHR)** outlined that as an implementing partner of UNICEF and UNHCR is carrying out the already mentioned activities in close cooperation with the two agencies.

**Lyudmyla Dobrovolska (WHO)** specified that WHO does not implement any specific activities in the area of TiP but is very much keen on supporting the work of the members of this group and provide help also in the legislative area directed at Ukrainian legislation specifics.

**Bulent Peker (UNHCR)** outlined their key role being the coordination mechanism in relation to response to situation of Ukrainian refugee. The protection and inclusion working group has been set up for this purpose, as well as trafficking coordination mechanism (as a part of the WG). UNHCR has been mainstreaming the standard practices for identification and responding to THB, case management, cooperation with partners at the border crossing points (e.g. Mareena c.a., HRL in Bratislava), making sure that people have access to information and are aware of risks.

**June Munala (UNHCR)** further explained that as a part of the response to gender-based violence (GBV) and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) among the main activities are included: assessing the vulnerability risks in cooperation with front liners, making sure the antitrafficking networks are strengthened and include all relevant actors. It is important to also highlight a so-called 5W tool that helps to coordinate the activities of various actors including the THB, GBV and PSEA prevention and to see gaps and overlaps of SK government actors, NGOs and UN agencies who are part of the response to UE situation.

Other thing has been identified especially associated with accommodation arrangement – the process of setting up monitoring assessment and case management system is ongoing. It would be interesting to hear of any activities at the accommodation level (not only centres but other housing arrangement) and risks thereby related to PSEA and THB.

**Vladimir Slama (IOM)** – confirmed that already during the previous meeting, accommodation arrangements has been raised as a priority THB risk-prone area that needs to be addressed at not only the state monitored centres‘ level such as Gabčíkovo but also at the level of informal private accommodation or hostels where no organizations have direct influence on the targeted provision of preventative information. Here the cooperation with local governments is particularly necessary in the field of accommodation so the presence of ZMOS and SK8 is most welcome.

Furthermore, MOI was invited to provide a framework of this topic at their level.

**Soňa Grauzlová** (**ICFTPCP**) provided the overview of the programme for the protection and support of victims of trafficking. ICFTPCP is a body responsible for the implementation of this programme that victims and potential victims can be included into provided that a suspicion of trafficking exists. These people are provided with different services such as psychological counselling, medical assistance, help with getting tolerated stay in Slovakia or in case of UE refugees temporary shelter. The victims is given time to recover and to decide if they want to cooperate with law enforcement services or not. Survivors enter the programme on the voluntary basis and are not forced to report the suspected crime to officials.

In relations to the situation of Ukrainian refugees, IC seeks to reassess the directive in order to better reflect the needs of this specific groups of victims including families with children etc.

In the beginning of the conflict MOI has issued a leaflet in 6 languages in cooperation with other partners to raise awareness of the vulnerabilities and risks of THB for people on the run. These were distributed in the first contact centres and hotspots and other main hubs. The working hours of the hotline run by Slovak Catholic Charity have been prolonged for 24/7 and Ukrainian speakers were employed.

IC is also cooperating with Prešov University to train the Ukrainian students who often act as interpreters and therefore get into the UE community easier and are subjects of trust of refugee to be able to identify the vulnerabilities and potential victims of THB

National Unit for Combating Illegal Migration could not participate on this meeting, however they were consulted before this meeting and they do not have up till today any identified victims among the UE refugees despite fully focusing on screening of the complaints and potential suspicions.

**Katarína Kožuchová (MESRS SR)** gave a general overview of the situation in education of pupils (cca 10k of pupils already at schools, most of them in the elementary schools, majority in Bratislava regions, the least in Banská Bystrica region, 230 employees from Ukraine). They are addressing the needs of pupils, directors of schools, teachers as well as parents. A manual and methodology on how to deal with this complicated situation has been issued on the website of the ministry and a crisis line is ready to address the needs in this area. All information are available at the Ministry website for Ukrainians.

At the moment they are preparing a complex package of contributions directed at UE children that the parents can apply for. Additionally, they are cooperating with MOI’s Crime prevention Department and are preparing seminars on the human rights education.

**Zuzana Kapralová (General prosecutor’s office)** – outlined the efforts of GP’s office to avoid secondary victimization and called upon all the participants to cooperate and support victims in not hesitating to file a criminal complaint and help to overcome the irrational fears of law enforcement bodies.

**Monika Hlavičková (ZMOS)** pointed the attention on the towns‘ and villages‘ effort directly from the start of this crisis, trying to provide help and as much support as possible by e.g. creating a transparent account and collecting a large sum to support the directly impacted municipalities that provided humanitarian aid. None of the resource have been refunded by the state so far and municipalities have been left on their own and their tight budgets. ZMOS cooperates with partnering association in Ukraine based on daily communication however, this project is also stagnating due to financial constraints. ZMOS managed to procure material for to be sent to Ukraine. At a special meeting of ZMOS, mayor of Ubľa, bordering village have mentioned that many women in Ukraine have feared to come to Slovakia as they have been told they will be exploited and misused in Slovakia.

**Ľudmila Hajtolová (Slovak Catholic Charity)** supplemented more details on the functioning of the victim support programme and the available services. SCC is ready to go to the victims and provide direct intervention and support 24/7, offering the possibility to participate in the programme. Participation in the programme is voluntary. They are supporting victims in any kind of situation from UE – exploited women, elderly people, children, handicapped, are first and foremost to provide safe accommodation and sensitive attitude. They would like to highlight to all helping organization to recommend the programme to any potential victims and refer them in case of suspicion. They also support voluntary returns of the victims, if they wish.

**Vladimir Slama (IOM)**  kindly invited colleagues who have joined online for their inputs.

**Peter Halás (Migration Office)** highlighted two main areas of their work – identification of victims of THB (their officers have undergone trainings and are well equiped information-wise) and prevention (targeting the people not yet in the Slovak Republic but could be potentially susceptible and vulnerable to become victims).

**Alexandra Malangone (HRL)** focuses mainly building capacities, especially in recognition of modus operandi of the perpetrators in the context of mass displacement situations. They have been conducting trainings with National Crime Agency to selected colleagues from Labour Office in cooperation with Mareena, c.a. and People in Need, as well as Police Academy colleagues on how to recognize red flags in humanitarian settings, how to identify people in trafficking process, how to recognizes modules especially in methods of generating profit, how to operate and share open source intelligence, support to ongoing investigation, how to report crimes of THB, GBV, PSEA, degrading treatment etc.

**Eva Smilková (Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology)** – trainings of expert employees in the field of education and prevention activities are being conducted on continual basis not only as a part of this topic but also before. A website has been created for addressing the information demand (crisis intervention and information for employees how to work with refugee children), seminars and podcasts are being prepared and carried out. Expert employees of the Institute are requested regularly to visit the schools and deal with challenges stemming from this situation and reflect on all the situations of potential risks. Every important information is uploaded on their website.

**Miroslava Mošonová (NLI)** – NLI cooperates with the departments of Foreign Police and the National Unit for Combating Illegal Migration when performing the controls at workplaces. NLI performs controls of employment conditions and illegal employment, distributes information on the conditions of employing foreigners and refugees on their website. In April, they performed multiple controls especially targeting workplaces employing foreigners, Ukrainian refugees most of all, however no serious violations of legal standards and conditions were discovered. Several violations of legal norms and standards were discovered, however, of Ukrainians working in Slovakia as self-employed persons, as they were basically employed as dependent workers. This was identified as a violation of the ban on illegal employment as their work was basically a forced self-employment, and a complaint was filed. NLI continues with constant check of working conditions and salary payments with their trained professionals able to identify the signs of THB and reporting this to relevant authorities.

**Marek Jakab (SK8)** confirmed the efforts of local municipalities as well as regions to support the refugees since the start of the war, whether they are trying to only cross Slovakia or integrate into the society and search for accommodation, etc. or being placed in the social service facilities. In PSK there are currently 368 schooling facilities and other social service facilities, volunteers are still helping children at school and with doctor’s checks and employment search. They are also helping the refugees to integrate and give information to support prevention of THB. They will continue further, also trying to collect the relevant data and statistics in this field.

**Tomáš Koňuch (Tenenet)** – as a partner organization of UNICEF, they offer psychosocial support to beneficiaries in cooperation with the city magistrate in Bratislava. First line workers attended trainings in Vyšné Nemecké on the THB topic and they are trying to implement these processes and principles in their work. They created mobile teams comprised of psychologists, social workers and a paediatrician and these teams are visiting accommodation centres and facilities, where Ukrainians are accommodated but so far they have not identified any victim of THB or PSEA. They offer support and information and in case of need, refer them further.

**Vladimir Slama (IOM)** gave and overview of activities IOM is performing in relation to the Ukrainians leaving Ukraine. IOM is trying to make interconnection between the helpline and people on the run, informs about the available services in different bordering countries and other countries. The main focus is on preventative and awareness raising activities, often even before the entry to the country of transit of destination. A lot has been said about capacity building and training the relevant actors and workers at the Slovak territory. Here, IOM is aiming on both first responders working with clients and law enforcement agencies and state bodies, as well as teachers and social workers. These are activities of prevention aiming at impacting young people and children but also wider circles in hotspots and infocenters. IOM trains also first line responders in cooperation with IPčko (an NGO) and other crisis intervention services. IOM trains and supports also the humanitarian centre in Gabčíkovo, where workers are in daily contact with beneficiaries.

He further highlighted the importance of the national THB hotline where cases or suspicions can be referred to, this is important especially for helping professions and NGO workers in contact with and supported the promotion of this hotline so that the referral mechanism would be effective and would connect all the actors in the topic.

Based on today’s meeting‘s programme, one more thing should be raised and that is challenges or problems identified during implementation of the activities. Participants were invited to share if there are any concerns or topics that are not covered neither by intervention plans of NGOs or state offices but that are known from the practice and should be addressed.

**Michelle Fong (UNHCR)** – during the cash based interventions (CBI) that UNHCR is performing, persons under high risk of THB are being identified (so far around 15 unaccompanied minors – UAMs, who do not have their documents and legal status sorted out yet so proper establishment of their identity was not possible). Similarly, there are cases of caregivers who are waiting for the legal guardianship status which can take up to 2 months, so this presents an obvious risk of THB. More clarity on the establishment of legal guardianship procedures are necessary for future discussions.

**Vladimir Slama (IOM)** – unfortunately representatives of the Ministry of Labour could not join due to other urgent engagements but this topic will be referred to them also for the next meeting. Practice shows us that besides UAMs placed in Centres for children and families under MoL responsibility there are also other children who came and are still waiting for having the legal guardian established, which is necessary to follow up on. It would be beneficial to contact representatives from Ministry of Justice to get the courts‘ inside into the length and difficulties of the processes.

**Miroslava Mošonová (NLI)**  - there is no definition of the labour exploitation, this is a problem that our inspectors are dealing with when trying to differentiate if there is a case of forced labour or only common shortcomings. It would be helpful if this platform could help to steer the discussion that would lead to sensitive establishment of this defintion so that the employers too would not experience any damage.

**Vladimir Slama (IOM)** – exploitation often occurs when immediate needs are transferred into mid-term and long-term plans. Inclusion comprises also labour market integration with all the risks, unfortunately. IOM tries to actively alert beneficiaries as well as employers of such risks via also events, such as recently Profesia Days, by the work of our lawyers. He agreed that a public commitment of large companies or a definition of exploitation supported by the government level would be very helpful in setting the ethical framework for refugees, as this is a topic we will be getting back to often in the upcoming months.

Finally, Terms of Reference of this working group/task force were distributed also by email and will be resent to the members again to provide some comments or suggestions they find relevant. If the group does not object, the meetings would be conducted on monthly basis.

\*No objections were made.

Next meeting will be held, tentatively in the week of 20.6. tentatively (will be confirmed later on by email.)

**Bulent Peker (UNHCR)** - thanked to all participants and the colleagues from IOM for bringing all of us together. This is an important mile stone in the THB and protection topic. There is the umbrella for this task force that some of the participants present here are already members of – a Protection and Inclusion Working Group. If any of the members here would like to join the meeting, the next one is this Friday (27.5.). It will be attended by Border Police but also other issues including GBV and child protection will be discussed, as the efforts of this WG are very much linked to anti-THB, too.

**Vladimir Slama (IOM)** – also thanked to all members for their time and the MOI for cochairing the meeting. Minutes will be sent out, as well as the invitation for the next meeting of the group. In between the two, activities will be coordinated and further plans communicated