

**TASK FORCE ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (TF TiP)  
PROTECTION AND INCLUSION WORKING GROUP  
13.6.2024, 10:00  
Palisády 29, Bratislava**

**Attendees:**

**In person:**

Zuzana Bartalská (IOM), Martina Grošaft Cebecauerová (IOM), Katarína Štinglincová (UNHCR), Anastasiia Honcharenko (UNHCR)

**Online**

Lucia Baloghová (Ministry of Interior), Marek Bango (NJBPNM), Olga Pietruchová (UNHCR), Renáta Brennerová (Ministry of Labour), Simona Dančová (SKCH), Victoria Sirocká (US Embassy), Branko Kiss, Niamh Mc Evoy (IOM), Barbora Maráková (SHR), Anton (Tenenet), Alexandra Malangone (Human Rights League), Martin SVK.

Miroslav Kováč (interpreter), Zuzana Kianičková (interpreter)

**Agenda**

- Approval of the minutes from the last meeting,
- Regular update of partners from Department of Crime Prevention and Information Centre Office of Minister of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Catholic Charity, Program for support and protection of victims of human trafficking, National Unit for Fight against Illegal Migration, National Labour Inspectorate, IOM
- **Update of the situation in Ukraine, Niamh Mc Evoy, Protection Officer, IOM Ukraine**
- AOB (Any other business)

**Ms Zuzana Bartalská (IOM)** welcomed participants and thanked them for attending the on the thirteenth meeting of TF on TiP, and asked if there are any comments related to the Minutes of the last meeting.

After the Minutes were approved, she opened the floor to **Ms Lucia Baloghová from Department of Crime Prevention and Information Centre Office of the Ministry of Interior of SR** who provided an update for 2024 on victims of TiP. Since 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2024, there were 14 victims of TiP – 7 men (1 child), 7 women (4 children). Among these, there were 3 foreign nationals (Bulgaria). Among women, the purpose of sexual exploitation prevailed, among men forced labour with 1 case of sexual exploitation (1 male child victim). In 2024, victims have been exploited in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Netherlands and Germany. AVR was provided to men from Bulgaria, as they wanted to be returned to their homeland. Actual number of persons in the program of support to victims of TiP is 12 (6 from previous years - 4 women and 2 men).

**Ms Lucia Baloghová** also informed that within the third round of GRETA evaluation, the report on fulfilment of tasks was just submitted and was forwarded to the executive director of the Council. Since February and information meeting with GRETA representatives, intensive

communication is taking place over discrepancies. It is expected that in summer GRETA will approach us with a report and recommendations, which means that a statement on how Slovakia would deal with those will be prepared.

On 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2024, the Council adopted amendments to the Directive 2011/36 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. The text will enter into force twenty days after its publication in the Official Journal of the EU. It could come into force in the mid-July. In brief summary, in case of exploitation of surrogacy which was added, the update of the Criminal Code will be much needed. Also, terminology needs to be united in terms of forced marriage. In Slovakia, we use “nútené sobáše”, not “nútené manželstvo” in cooperation and accordance with Ministry of Justice. Among other amendments to the directive there is also criminalisation of deliberate exploitation of victims also such as using the service provided by a trafficking victim, which should be also taken into account when amending our Criminal Code. Furthermore, member states should create specialization for TiP at the level of police and justice. Although Slovakia has the National Unit for Fight Against Illegal Migration, it is important that we continue in these intentions further on. If the specialization would be implemented at the regional prosecutor’s office level, these regional prosecutors could provide guidance to district prosecutors and contribute to further process of sensitization. Moreover, the level of penalties and aggravating circumstances have also been strengthened, but at the same time, it also stipulates that victims of human trafficking should not be under criminal prosecution even if they have been engaged in criminal activity. This would require amendment in our legal system (Zákon o priestupkoch). In addition, contact points for cross border referral of victims should be established. This means that particular institution would be responsible for cooperation between the countries allowing for more effective returns to the country of origin or the place of previous residence. Further, there has been a major amendment in the Directive such as an obligation for member states to have independent national coordinators, and independent institutions which would independently evaluate the policies of the state. It also means that national reporters come out of play. Among the member states, data collection such as what kind of data and in what timeframes should be collected is emphasized.

**Ms Bartalská (IOM)** asked whether, in our context, national coordinator is the Information Centre or not? Does it mean that the tasks of national reporters will be transferred to national coordinators?

**Ms Lucia Baloghová (Ministry of Interior)** explained that at the moment, national coordinator is the State Secretary of Ministry of Interior, Natalia Kurilovska. Coordinator is responsible over adopting policies and coordination. Now the question is how we deal with the changes and what would be next, it might be a subject of expert meetings at the level of the Ministry of Interior.

Further, **Ms Lucia Baloghová (Ministry of Interior)** continued with an update on Information Offices for Victims of Crime - Since 2022 to 2024, 4 persons approached offices with human trafficking issues. From 2022, the counselling services were extended to temporary protection holders. Overall, 122 clients from Ukraine approached information offices. There are 8 interpreters from universities who can provide support with interpretation. Furthermore, information offices organize regional platforms. Next such session will take place on 17<sup>th</sup> of June on the topic of human trafficking at which also IOM, Lucia Baloghová, NJBPNM will

participate. On 11<sup>th</sup> of June, expert forum of project ASIT took place in cooperation with the coordinator aimed at building trust and joint protocol focusing on victims of human trafficking. It is a joint activity between Ministry of Interior, other institutions and member states. On 6<sup>th</sup> of June, implementing strategy in relation to the program on human trafficking was approved. The strategy serves for elaboration of the Action Plan and should be valid for 12 months in order to reflect on actual challenges and for the Action Plan to be up to date.

**Question – How long do the victims participate in the program?**

**Ms Lucia Baloghová (Ministry of Interior)** responded that sometimes 3 days and sometimes couple of years. If necessary, concrete data can be provided.

The word **was given to Mr Marek Bango (NJPBNM)** followed with an update from the National Unit for the Fight Against Illegal Migration. This year, there are 16 identified victims of TiP out of which 11 were children (3 males for labour exploitation, 13 females for sexual exploitation). There was 1 victim in Germany and 1 in Hungary. Foreign nationals were 3 – labour exploitation of 2 persons from Bulgaria in Senec and Dunajska Streda at construction site, and 1 victim was working at an object of pet site in Bratislava. There was one victim in Germany and one in Hungary.

**Ms Silvia Dančová** from Slovak Catholic Charity provided an update on the program of support to victims of TiP. At the moment, there are 12 victims of TiP in the program. There has been a decline in the number of victims recently in the program, which can be so for various reasons such as the return to the home country etc. Currently there is an increase of potential victims, who contact them on national helpline, or are referred from other agencies such as IOM. There were 3 victims from Bulgaria – 2 persons returned and 1 refused to return. In terms of the length of the stay in the program – the victim can be in the program for 6 months in case he/she does not cooperate with authorities, and if yes, the person may remain in the program throughout the whole period.

**Question - Are the persons from Ukraine contacting them?**

**Ms Silvia Dančová (SKCH)** explained that yes, they are, but mostly in terms of questions related to residence.

**Ms Zuzana Bartalská (IOM)** asked if they can communicate in Ukrainian language on the hotline?

**Ms Silvia Dančová (SKCH)** explained that at the moment they cannot ensure communication in Ukrainian language via Ukrainian speaking person, however they are trying to find ways of communication.

**Ms Niamh Mc Evoy (IOM)** provided an update on the current context in Ukraine. She mentioned that the security situation has deteriorated significantly. According to the estimates, there are 6,4 million refugees from Ukraine in EU and 3,5 million people currently displaced within Ukraine. There around 16,8 million people in protection need in 2024 out of

which 14,6 million in Ukraine (+300 000 people with disabilities since last year) and 2,2 million in neighbouring countries. General profile of trafficking survivors in Ukraine between 2000 – 2024 with altogether 20 149 people – 51 per cent are women, 757 children, 74 per cent labour exploitation, and destination - Russia, Poland and Ukraine. These numbers are not final since we do not have figures from occupied territories or from Russian Federation. There is also a gap between exploitation and identification. In 2024, 374 survivors of TiP assisted by IOM Ukraine. It is also important to take into account that persons may not be comfortable to be identified abroad, but rather when returning back. Most of the exploitation occurs in agricultural, fishing and construction industries. Data shows that young displaced men are very vulnerable to trafficking, to labour exploitation, willing to travel abroad to avoid conscription. Most often, recruitment happens through friends and acquaintances, especially via social networks. Another major development with huge impacts is the Amendment to the conscription from 18th of May. There have been also changes to the IDP allowance eligibility as the allowance was reduced which means that this year only 1 million people received support in comparison to 2,5 million people last year. It further increases vulnerability of huge amount of population. However, it is important to highlight that most vulnerable could be those who stayed in their homes while basic infrastructure was destroyed and are therefore not IDPs. There is a trafficking hotline 527, [www.527.org.ua](http://www.527.org.ua), [www.stoptrafficking.org](http://www.stoptrafficking.org). Awareness raising counter-trafficking campaigns in trains also serve for spreading the information about trafficking and preventing.

**Ms Victoria Sirocká (US Embassy)** asked if IOM UA dealt with any victim from Slovakia who returned to UA.

To this, **Ms Niamh Mc Evoy (IOM)** responded that there have been very few, there has not been a large trend.

**Ms Zuzana Bartalská (IOM)** asked about what has changed during these two years, whether there are any trends?

**Ms Niamh Mc Evoy (IOM)** explained that as the conflict became protracted, vulnerability of people increased further, support has been reduced, access to basic infrastructure and health care more difficult. Second, at the beginning, there was an unprecedented huge displacement – this has stabilized, needs have changed.

**Ms Oľga Pietruchová (UNCHR)** asked about what support is provided to IDPs?

To this, **Ms Niamh Mc Evoy (IOM)** explained that the number of people receiving support reduced due to resource constraints. Overall, social protection is much weaker. Second, social cohesion has been impacted negatively as well.

**Ms Zuzana Bartalská (IOM)** thanked all the speakers for important updates following with an invitation on behalf of IOM to public events of EMN educational seminar taking place on

17th and 18th of June – drama play *Domov, kde je ten tvój?* and a movie screening *Starý Dub*.

**Ms Alexandra Melangoga (Human Rights League)** invited to the Annual Integration Forum, which will take place on Tuesday, with interesting pannels due to the Refugee Day, mentioning that we might all meet at Ambrella Walk on 22nd of June.

Following this, **Ms Oľga Pietruchová (UNHCR)** also invited to the exhibition at Umelka – canvases with GBV messages, which will be there for two weeks supported by different events and discussions.

**Ms Zuzana Bartalská (IOM)** thanked participants and closed the thirteenth meeting of TF on TiP.