

**The 2023 Report of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group**

**on Combating Trafficking in Human**

**Beings**

**Ljubljana, May 2024**

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 **Introduction**

The Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (hereinafter: the MDS TZL or the Inter-Ministerial Working Group), which was established in 2003 and is headed by the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (hereinafter: the National Coordinator), continued to carry out tasks within the scope of their powers and activities set out in the 2023–2024 Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The Anti-Trafficking Service of the Ministry of the Interior (hereinafter: the MNZ SPBTL) lent professional support to the National Coordinator.

The 2023 report on the work of the MDS TZL summarises the activities carried out for the prevention and combating trafficking in human beings in five chapters. The first presents changes in legislation and activities in accordance with national and international obligations. The report then describes the activities for the prevention of trafficking in human beings, including various forms of awareness-raising activities among the general public and among risk groups of potential victims of trafficking and training modules for the professional public whose work is connected with the issue in question. The chapter on the detection, investigation and prosecution of criminal offences contains the report on the work of the Police and prosecutors, who play a key role in this field. This chapter also presents the activities of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: the IRSD) and the Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: the FURS), as the issue of trafficking in human beings in a broader sense in intertwined with the issue of labour exploitation and undeclared employment and work. The fourth chapter contains information on help and care for victims of trafficking in human beings, while the last chapter describes the international activities of the MDS TZL during the reporting year and partnerships at the national level.

**1. Legislation and policies**

**1.1 Changes in legislation**

On 27 January 2023, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted an amendment to the Criminal Code (KZ-1J) which, among other things, transposed the provisions of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims.

The amendment supplemented Article 113 of the KZ-1, defining the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings, by including begging in the forms of exploitation, as specified in the Directive. Furthermore, Article 113 was supplemented by the diction "slavery-like relationships", which, among other things, includes bonded labour, serfdom, selling a woman into marriage, handing over a woman to another for a consideration, cases where a woman becomes another’s property after the death of her husband, and handing over a child to another for the purposes of child exploitation or child labour, as defined by the Directive. The Article was supplemented by a new paragraph six, treating criminal offences committed by an official or public employee when carrying out their duties as aggravated criminal offences.

The criminal offences from Article 90, paragraph three, for which the period of limitation commences on the day when the injured party reaches the age of majority and not on the day when the criminal offence is committed, were extended to include enslavement from Article 112 and trafficking in human beings from Article 113 of the KZ-1.

On 28 June 2023, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Act Amending the Compensation to Crime Victims Act (hereinafter: the ZOZKD-B), expanding the right to victim compensation to third-country nationals. The amended Act thus eliminated the formal requirement of citizenship of Slovenia or another Member State of the European Union (hereinafter: the EU) to obtain compensation under this Act and provided for the payment of compensation from the state scheme regardless of the victim’s citizenship.The amended Act also introduced the possibility for the plaintiff to renounce judicial protection, thereby ensuring a speedier finality of decisions and making it easier to obtain compensation.

On 22 September 2023, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2023–2030. The Resolution is a strategic document defining the objectives, measures and key policymakers in the area of equal opportunities for men and women in particular spheres of life in Slovenia for the period from 2023 to 2030. The document also includes activities to combat trafficking in human beings.

In March, members of the Committee on Justice and the Committee on EU Affairs of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia considered and confirmed the proposed Position of the Republic of Slovenia on the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, adopted by the European Commission on 19 December 2022. The adopted Position was the basis for negotiations on the proposal for a directive as part of the EU Council and the European Parliament.

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

On 25 May 2023, the Government adopted a Decision amending the decision establishing the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, appointing a new National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and updating the Working Group’s membership.

The MDS TZL held two meetings in 2023. It also considered current issues in combating trafficking in human beings and adopted decisions for a more efficient implementation of policies in this area. A meeting of the core Working Group was also called to discuss the adequacy of legislative provisions concerning the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of forced labour, which resulted in an initiative to amend Article 113 of the Criminal Code.

The core Working Group also met once to come up with systemic solutions regarding the placement and care of children who have experienced trafficking in human beings, agreeing on further steps to solve the problem.

The MDS TZL produced the 2023–2024 Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, which was approved by the Government on 26 January 2023, and an annual report on its work in 2022, of which the Government took note on 8 June 2023.

June 2023 marked the end of the third cycle of assessment with regard to Slovenia’s implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which resulted in a number of recommendations and the requirement to report on the implemented measures by 16 June 2025. The Government took note of the report and the recommendations on 13 July 2023.

In line with the established practice, the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: the MNZ) continued its involvement in the drafting of the annual report on trafficking in human beings of the United States Department of State in 2023. The report ranked Slovenia among Tier 2 countries that do not fully meet the standards concerning the fight against trafficking in human beings but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards. The report pointed out that courts had not convicted anyone for the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings for a second year in a row. Other issues included compensation, the identification and prosecution of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of forced labour and labour exploitation, and the identification of victims among applicants for international protection and children.

**2 Prevention**

**2.1 Raising awareness among the general public**

In 2023, the MDS TZL continued to raise awareness among the general public and the media on the issue of trafficking in human beings. The subject was most widely covered on EU Anti-Trafficking Day and World Day Against Trafficking in Persons and upon the publication of GRETA’s third report on Slovenia regarding the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

**2.1.1 EU Anti-Trafficking Day and World Day Against Trafficking in Persons**

The MDS TZL dedicated this year’s EU Anti-Trafficking Day to raising awareness on trafficking in human beings for the purpose of forced labour and labour exploitation. To this end, it organised an awareness-raising campaign, financed by the MNZ and the Government Communication Office and carried out by the DrogArt association, Iz principa social enterprise. Between 18 and 20 October, the project worked to raise awareness among the general public and vulnerable groups with the help of live "products" (exploited workers) in sales packaging (catalogue), exhibited on the main pedestrian streets in Maribor and Ljubljana. In order to raise awareness of trafficking in human beings among employers, an e-catalogue containing various profiles of the most frequently exploited workers was sent to more than 200 companies in Slovenia, along with the Manual for Employers.

To present the project and mark EU Anti-Trafficking Day, a media event was held on 18 October, attended by the National Coordinator and representatives of the IRSD, the Labour Counselling Service and the Ključ Society.

On the occasion of EU Anti-Trafficking Day, Caritas Slovenia contributed an article entitled "Ten prejudices on trafficking in human beings", which was published in the November issue of the *Žarek dobrote* magazine.

On World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, the MNZ issued a press release on its website and social media about the UN campaign "Reach every victim of trafficking, leave no one behind", which focused on helping victims of human trafficking.

In its press release, the MNZ called attention to the particular vulnerability of children, women, migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons to trafficking in human beings. The risk of trafficking is heightened by global crises, armed conflicts, pandemics, economic and social instability, and natural disasters. The MNZ highlighted that victims of trafficking in Slovenia receive comprehensive assistance and support as part of victim assistance programmes provided by NGOs and humanitarian organisations selected in a public tender.

On the occasion of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, Caritas Slovenia addressed a press release to various media outlets, some of which summarised it on their news channels. The press release was also published on their website and Facebook profile.

**2.1.2 Website**

In 2023, the MNZ SPBTL continued to ensure that the content of the website on the central government portal gov.si ([https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/boj-proti-trgovini-z-ljudmi/http://www.vlada.si/boj\_proti\_trgovini\_z\_ljudmi/](https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/boj-proti-trgovini-z-ljudmi/http%3A//www.vlada.si/boj_proti_trgovini_z_ljudmi/)) in Slovenian and English was consistently updated with information and data for the current year. The MNZ SPBTL also ensured that the content was consistent with the provisions of the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications Act.

**2.1.3 Other activities**

Members of the MDS TZL were involved in the preparation of various media publications in the reporting year. The most media attention was devoted to GRETA’s third report on Slovenia regarding the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

The Ključ Society, in collaboration with the City of Ljubljana (hereinafter: the MOL) and the Foundation for Funding Disability and Humanitarian Organisations in the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: the FIHO), organised three events for the general public attended by 94 participants.

**2.2 Raising awareness among risk groups**

**2.2.1 Raising awareness among children and young people**

* **Activities of the MNZ SPBTL**

In accordance with the 2023–2024 Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the MNZ SPBTL continued to carry out systematic workshops aimed at raising awareness among children and young people of the dangers of trafficking, forms of trafficking, and appropriate action and self-protective behaviour. Based on a three-year plan, divided by region, the 2022/2023 workshops were carried out in primary schools in the Central Slovenia, Gorenjska, Goriška and Zasavska regions and secondary schools in the Podravska, Savinjska, Koroška and Pomurska regions. In 2023/2024, awareness-raising was organised in primary schools in the Notranjska, Obalno-kraška, Posavska and South-eastern Slovenia regions and secondary schools in the Zasavska, Goriška, Gorenjska and Central Slovenia regions.

280 workshops were carried out in 2023 (140 in 2022), i.e. 146 in primary and 134 in secondary schools, attended by 5,267 students and 304 teachers. The analysis of surveys completed by the students at the end of the workshops showed that the aim of the awareness-raising was achieved, as nearly all participating students acquired new information (98%) enabling most of them (71%) to identify trafficking in human beings.

*Table 1: Workshops on trafficking carried out in primary and secondary schools in 2023*

| ***School/Region*** | ***Number of workshops*** | ***Number of students*** | ***Number of teachers*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary schools** | **146** | **2,850** | **183** |
| Gorenjska | 32 | 634 | 43 |
| Goriška | 13 | 270 | 17 |
| Notranjska | 9 | 169 | 13 |
| Posavska | 9 | 167 | 9 |
| South-eastern Slovenia | 14 | 247 | 14 |
| Zasavska | 16 | 303 | 22 |
| Central Slovenia | 47 | 935 | 52 |
| Obalno-kraška | 6 | 125 | 13 |
| **Secondary schools** | **134** | **2,417** | **121** |
| Central Slovenia | 24 | 522 | 20 |
| Gorenjska | 6 | 128 | 5 |
| Zasavska | 5 | 90 | 3 |
| Goriška | 7 | 143 | 3 |
| Koroška | 13 | 255 | 16 |
| Pomurska | 18 | 268 | 18 |
| Podravska | 37 | 681 | 33 |
| Savinjska | 24 | 330 | 23 |
| **Total** | **280** | **5,267** | **304** |

* **Selection of NGOs and humanitarian organisations**

The Ključ Society carried out several workshops for the MOL to raise awareness among young people (students), namely "Ključna šola za fante in dekleta" (Key School for Boys and Girls), "Prava zveza" (A Real Relationship), "Telesnica" (Body Workshop) and "Ključno za Lajf" (Key for Life). It organised a total of 122 events attended by 2,377 people. The "Prava zveza" training workshops for young professionals, organised by the Zaznavnica project and the FIHO, included 32 events attended by 745 participants. A project aimed at providing information for vulnerable groups in cooperation with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (hereinafter: the UNHCR) comprised 871 events attended by 3,545 people.

Within the contract on co-financing the "Providing assistance to victims of human trafficking – Crisis accommodation" project, Caritas Slovenia held 25 preventive workshops, attended by 547 students (as well as teachers and parents) from six statistical regions (Gorenjska, Posavska, Savinjska, Obalno-kraška, Central Slovenia and Zasavska). At schools and on all other occasions (meetings, trainings, social events, etc.), students and counselling services were provided with prevention materials on the dangers and traps of trafficking in human beings. The infographics developed in December 2022, warning of the dangers and traps of trafficking, was also displayed and published on the Caritas Slovenia website and Facebook profile.

**2.2.2 Preventive action in terms of awareness-raising and the prevention of trafficking in human beings in the Roma community**

To strengthen multidisciplinary elimination of harmful practices in the Roma community, such as the flight of minors to harmful environments (early marriages) and forced marriages, the Government Office for National Minorities continued the work of the ad hoc working group in this area, bringing together representatives of the competent ministries, the Police, the Prosecutor’s Office, the Association of Social Work Centres of Slovenia, coordinators for the prevention of family violence, NGOs and the Roma Community Council of the Republic of Slovenia. The extended working group for dealing with cases of early and forced marriage in the Roma community met on 5 October 2023 at the introductory meeting of the National Platform for Roma project (SIFOROMA6). The main purpose of the meeting was to define the key needs and further steps to be taken to implement and improve specialised training in environments where these problems occur and to find the most appropriate manner of raising awareness among Roma people with the help of videos. The meeting participants presented overviews of activities carried out in this area in their respective institutions or organisations and exchanged important information relevant to their work since the last meeting.

As copies of the 2021 Handbook on the Identification of Early and Forced Marriages in the Roma Community and on Interventions in These Cases, which is available at <https://www.gov.si/assets/vladne-sluzbe/UN/SIFOROMA-4/Urad-za-narodnosti_Nacionalna-platforma-za-Rome_prirocnik_165x240mm.pdf>, ran out in 2023 (500 copies), the Government Office for National Minorities ordered a reprint, i.e. an additional 500 copies, as part of the current SIFOROMA6 project.

Specialist trainings and consultations with professionals in regions or environments where this issue had been identified were held in both 2022 and 2023. As agreed by the working group, the structure of participants was as multidisciplinary as possible so as to allow for an effective exchange of experiences between representatives of various institutions that encountered or might encounter such phenomena in the course of their work. In 2022, five specialist trainings or consultations were carried out for management and professionals at institutions in the local environments where such phenomena occurred (in Novo Mesto, Krško, Kočevje and Maribor).

Four specialised trainings were carried out in 2023 on the identification of early and forced marriages in the Roma community and on interventions in these cases. The first presentation was held on 19 January 2023 in Črnomelj and was aimed at professionals working at institutions (school counselling services, specialist services at social work centres, coordinators for Roma issues, etc.) in the area of Bela Krajina. The second presentation was on 29 March 2023 in Ljubljana, aimed at the same target group in the Ljubljana area. The following two trainings were held in smaller groups, targeting mainly Roma assistants and counsellors at schools. The first specialised training was held on 20 November 2023 for interested participants in South-eastern Slovenia and the second on 18 December 2023 for interested participants in North-eastern Slovenia and Maribor. Roma assistants proved to be an important link between Roma children, their parents and school staff.

In total, four trainings were attended by 25 representatives of social work centres, 33 school representatives, 23 Police representatives, one representative of the judiciary, four representatives of the Prosecutor’s Office, ten NGO representatives, one healthcare representative, and six representatives of other organisations or institutions (i.e. people’s university representatives, journalists, etc.). Two things should be taken into account with these figures: (1) some participants attended more than one training and were therefore counted in these figures more than once, particularly lecturers (representatives of the Roma population, the social work centre, the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office, the General Police Directorate and NGOs), and (2) the events were aimed at professionals, particularly representatives of key institutions in local environments, i.e. social work centres, schools, the Police and Roma assistants. As activities aimed at awareness-raising in the Roma community will follow in 2024, the numbers of Roma community members at these events is low.

Nevertheless, the office reached many representatives of key institutions, assessing the trainings as successful, as was confirmed by the participants’ satisfaction based on the follow-up assessments. Trainings on this topic under the National Platform for Roma project (SIFOROMA6) will continue in 2024.

The Office also participated in a specialist training on trafficking in human beings via video conference on 28 September 2023, organising a presentation in collaboration with the MNZ on the issue, with an emphasis on the identification of forced marriage. The training was aimed at administrative unit employees, particularly registrars and those issuing residence permits.

On 14 February 2023, under the National Platform for Roma project (SIFOROMA5), the Office published a video competition "SIFOROMA": Let Children Be Children. The aim of the competition was to raise awareness on the unacceptability of early and forced marriages in the Roma community and on their negative and harmful impacts on the individual and society. Seven applications were received by the submission deadline. The selection procedure was run by an expert committee appointed by the Director of the Government Office for National Minorities. Based on the criteria (consistency with the topic of the competition, originality, message and video quality), the committee awarded the authors of three videos. Each of them received a cash prize, i.e. EUR 1,000 for first place, EUR 800 for second place and EUR 600 for third place. The awarded videos premiered at the SIFOROMA5 closing ceremony, which took place on 14 June 2023 at the Brdo Congress Centre, marking the 15th anniversary of the Roma Academic Club. The event was attended by 68 representatives of numerous institutions and organisations. The videos were also shown on the TV programme *Kaj govoriš? = So vakeres?* and at trainings for professionals at various institutions and for Roma assistants. They were also uploaded to the Office’s YouTube channel ([https://www.youtube.com/@uradzanarodnosti](https://www.youtube.com/%40uradzanarodnosti)) and will be available in the future to various programme and project providers working in environments with a Roma population, especially where the issue is particularly pressing.

**2.3 Raising awareness among and training of the professional community**

The Criminal Police Directorate at the General Police Directorate (hereinafter: the GPU UKP) continuously trains both criminal investigators and local police officers. In this context, attention is paid to identifying various forms of trafficking in human beings and identifying the indicators of potential victims of trafficking and its perpetrators and to competencies in subsequent specific procedures concerning the treatment of victims and conduct of pre-trial proceedings.

Between 13 and 15 June 2023, training courses were provided to criminal investigators from regional criminal police divisions who investigate crimes of trafficking in human beings. The programme was attended by 90 people, mostly criminal investigators from regional criminal police divisions and the GPU UKP, along with prosecutors from the Specialised State Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office), employees of the MNZ SPBTL, representatives of NGOs, and representatives of the security authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Granična policija) and the Dutch Police.

The GPU UKP carried out five trainings of police officers and police station chiefs. The purpose of the training was to raise awareness among police officers about the issue of trafficking in human beings, to identify indicators of trafficking and to familiarise them with the procedures relating to identifying victims. During the training, police officers also learned about the importance of police cooperation with civil society in carrying out procedures involving victims of human trafficking and assistance and protection programmes. The training was attended by 120 police officers from all police directorates.

The GPU UKP and criminal police divisions also participated in trainings on the consideration of applications for international protection alongside legal representatives for unaccompanied minors.

The Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants (hereinafter: the UOIM) continued regular trainings of social workers and professionals on various forms of violence, vulnerability and trafficking in human beings.

On 30 November 2023, the MNZ SPBTL organised a training session on trafficking in human beings for FURS employees. The participants learned about the current trafficking trends and legislative changes, with an emphasis on identifying forced labour or labour exploitation. The training was attended by 49 FURS employees.

IRSD inspectors attended a training in Kranjska Gora between 13 and 14 June 2023. The inspectors also learned about labour exploitation and forced labour as one of the purposes of trafficking in human beings. Fifty inspectors took part in the training.

On 13 September 2023 at Jable Castle in Loka pri Mengšu, a training on trafficking in human beings was organised for members of the Slovenian Armed Forces and employees of the Ministry of Defence. The participants obtained the latest information and learned about their duties when identifying these criminal offences and the importance of reducing demand for services and goods provided by victims of trafficking exploited for these purposes. The training was attended by 20 employees, who will pass on the acquired knowledge to their co-workers within their organisation.

On 28 September 2023, the MNZ SPBTL organised a training on trafficking in human beings, with a focus on identifying forced marriages, aimed at administrative unit employees, particularly registrars, who may encounter this issue when conducting marriage ceremonies. The training was held via video conference and included police and UN representatives. An MNZ SPBTL representative presented the issue of trafficking and its main forms and laid out the forms of assistance provided in Slovenia to victims of trafficking and the contacts of competent institutions. A GPU UKP representative presented the indicators for identifying victims of trafficking and the key Police findings regarding forced marriages in Slovenia, while a UN representative presented the Handbook on the Identification of Early and Forced Marriages in the Roma Community and on Interventions in These Cases. The training was attended by more than 170 administrative unit employees.

On 5 October 2023, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs held a consular consultation on the topic of trafficking in human beings for 60 employees working in diplomatic missions and consular posts of the Republic of Slovenia.

On 20 October 2023 in Brdo pri Kranju, marking the 20th anniversary of the MDS TZL, the MNZ SPBTL organised a large expert meeting on the topic of trafficking in human beings. The aim of the meeting was to provide the relevant experts (including judges and state prosecutors) with current information on the fight against trafficking at the international level and to exchange views on key challenges facing Slovenia. The discussion focused on various reports and recommendations of international monitoring mechanisms, current EU legislation proposals and the latest amendments to internal legislation in the field. One of the guests attending the meeting was ECHR Judge Davor Derenčinović. The event was attended by 54 representatives of numerous state institutions and civil society.

On 23 November 2023, the Social Chamber of Slovenia conducted a seminar for professional workers and professional assistants of social work centres on working with foreigners, refugees, migrants and victims of trafficking in human beings within the Programme for exercising the public authority of the Social Chamber of Slovenia for the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023, which is financed by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (hereinafter: the MDDSZ). The first part of the seminar focused on challenges and examples of good practice in working with foreigners, refugees and other people of migrant background. In the second part, the Ključ Society presented the systemic regulation of the field of combating trafficking in Slovenia and assistance schemes for people who have experienced trafficking. Various forms of exploitation of children as victims of trafficking were treated separately. The training concluded with an interactive workshop, where participants were presented with a case study and looked for solutions to open questions relating to the powers of social work centres. Fifty-one participants attended the seminar.

As part of preventive activities under Section 2.2.1, the MNZ SPBTL carried out an awareness-raising campaign for 304 school teachers.

In 2023, the Ključ Society provided 35 training sessions for professionals, which were attended by 517 persons.

**3. Detecting, investigating and prosecuting criminal offences related to trafficking in human beings**

This chapter, on the detection, investigation and prosecution of criminal offences, mainly covers the activities of the Police and prosecutors' offices, including measurable results on the number of offenders dealt with and on injured parties, and on the number of charges and final convictions. The chapter also includes the activities of the IRSD and the FURS, because in monitoring the implementation of the sectoral legislation within their respective remit, the content of their activities overlaps and generally relates to the issue of labour exploitation, illegal employment and work and to the employment and exploitation of migrant workers.

**3.1 Activities of the Police**

The trend in combating trafficking in human beings has continued over the years, with Slovenia remaining a target and a transit country for victims of trafficking most often exploited for prostitution and sexual abuse. Other identified forms of victim exploitation occur less often.

The detection of issues related to the exploitation of victims of trafficking in human beings depends primarily on proactive police activities aimed at detecting these criminal offences and at recognising or identifying the victims.These criminal offences are very rarely reported by injured parties or citizens.

**3.1.1. Trafficking in human beings as per Article 113 of the KZ-1[[1]](#footnote-1)**

In 2023, the Police dealt with 74 suspected criminal offences of trafficking in human beings, which is much more than in 2022. Based on the investigated reports, the Police confirmed 25 criminal offences of trafficking in human beings and filed criminal complaints with the competent state attorney’s office. In 11 cases, the Police found no grounds for filing a criminal complaint based on the information and evidence collected and sent reports to the competent state attorney’s office pursuant to Article 148, paragraph ten, of the Criminal Procedure Act (hereinafter: the ZKP).

*Table 2: Number of investigated criminal offences of trafficking in human beings in the 2019–2023 period*

| Trafficking in human beings | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criminal complaint | 13 | 29 | 42 | 6 | 25 |
| Report (Article 148, paragraph ten, of the ZKP) | 14 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 11 |

In 2023, the police identified 21 victims of the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings and 60 potential[[2]](#footnote-2) victims of trafficking. The victims identified were citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, China, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia, and Ukraine. All the identified victims were female and were exploited for sexual purposes. In the reporting period, the Police also investigated a case of a juvenile victim from Slovenia.

*Table 3: Number of victims of trafficking in human beings identified in 2023 by sex and nationality*

| Nationality | Male | Female | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Montenegro | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Croatia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| China | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Romania | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Slovenia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Serbia | 0 | 12 | 12 |
| Ukraine | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 0 | 21 | 21 |

*Table 3: Number of victims of trafficking in human beings identified in 2023 by sex and form of exploitation*

| Form of exploitation | Male | Female | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sexual exploitation | 0 | 21 | 21 |
| Total | 0 | 21 | 21 |

*Table 4: Number of potential victims of trafficking in human beings identified in 2023 by sex and nationality*

| Nationality | Male | Female | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Bhutan | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Philippines | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Colombia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Germany | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Nepal | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Portugal | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Romania | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Slovenia | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Spain | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Sri Lanka | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Sweden | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Ukraine | 0 | 42 | 42 |
| Afghanistan | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Portugal | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 2 | 58 | 60 |

The Police investigated a total of 16 people, of whom 11 men and 5 women, suspected of the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings. They were predominantly Slovenian citizens.

*Table 6: Number of suspects dealt with in 2023 for the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings against whom criminal complaints were filed, by sex and nationality*

| Nationality | Male | Female | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Kosovo | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Slovenia | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| Serbia | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Dominican Republic | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| China | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Romania | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 11 | 5 | 16 |

*Table 5: Number of legal entities investigated for the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings in 2023*

| Type of document | 2023 |
| --- | --- |
| Criminal complaint | 2 |
| Report (Article 148, paragraphs seven and ten, of the ZKP) | 2 |
| Total | 4 |

**3.1.2 Other criminal offences**

Since the issue of trafficking in human beings is often closely linked to certain other criminal offences, the Police also deal with criminal offences of exploitation of prostitution and violations of the fundamental rights of workers in relation to trafficking in human beings.

1. Exploitation of prostitution pursuant to Article 175 of the Criminal Code (KZ-1)

In 2023, the Police dealt with 32 criminal offences of exploitation of prostitution, which is much more than in 2022 (4). The Police also dealt with two cases where there were grounds for suspecting that the criminal offence of exploitation of prostitution had been committed but found no grounds for filing criminal complaints. Reports were filed with the competent prosecutors' office in this regard, pursuant to Article 148, paragraph ten, of the ZKP.

*Table 6: Number of investigated criminal offences of exploitation of prostitution in the 2019–2023 period*

| Exploitation of prostitution | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criminal complaint | 6 | 1 | 19 | 4 | 32 |
| Report  | 4 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 2 |

In 2023, the Police identified 24 victims of this criminal offence, mostly nationals of Slovenia and Serbia.

*Table 7: Number of victims of exploitation of prostitution identified in 2023 by sex and nationality*

| Nationality | Male | Female | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slovenia | 0 | 10 | 10 |
| Croatia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Serbia | 0 | 9 | 9 |
| Ukraine | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Dominican Republic | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 0 | 24 | 24 |

The Police investigated a total of 11 people, 7 of whom were Slovenian citizens, of whom 4 men and 3 women, suspected of the criminal offence of exploitation of prostitution.

*Table 8: Number of suspects for the criminal offence of exploitation of prostitution investigated in 2023 by sex and nationality*

| Nationality | Male | Female | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slovenia | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Montenegro | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Kosovo | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| North Macedonia | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 7 | 4 | 11 |

1. Violation of fundamental workers' rights pursuant to Article 196 of the KZ-1

In 2023, the Police dealt with 906 criminal offences related to the violation of fundamental workers' rights under Article 196 of the KZ-1 in which the elements of labour exploitation of injured parties were found. Both the injured parties and suspects were predominantly Slovenian citizens. No elements of forced labour as a form of exploitation of victims of human trafficking were found, either in the pre-trial proceedings or in subsequent criminal proceedings.

*Table 9: Number of injured parties who were victims of the criminal offence of violation of fundamental workers’ rights identified in 2023 by sex and nationality*

| Nationality | Male | Female | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slovenia | 178 | 75 | 253 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 226 | 1 | 227 |
| Croatia | 32 | 3 | 35 |
| Serbia | 64 | 1 | 65 |
| Kosovo | 141 | 1 | 142 |
| North Macedonia | 13 | 0 | 13 |
| Montenegro | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Bulgaria | 10 | 2 | 12 |
| Hungary | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Slovakia | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Albania | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Turkey | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Total | 682 | 83 | 765 |

*Table 10: Number of suspects for the criminal offence of violation of fundamental workers’ rights identified in 2023 by sex and nationality*

| Nationality | Male | Female | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slovenia | 84 | 27 | 111 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 12 | 1 | 13 |
| Croatia | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Serbia | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| Kosovo | 13 | 0 | 13 |
| North Macedonia | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Germany | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Bulgaria | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Belgium | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Austria | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 130 | 28 | 158 |

**3.2 Activities of the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office and district state prosecutors’ offices**

 In 2023, the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office, which has exclusive competence to prosecute criminal offences involving trafficking in human beings, continued to carry out its work relating to the criminal offences of trafficking in human beings under Article 113 of the KZ-1, enslavement under Article 112 of the KZ-1 and exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1.

**3.2.1 Criminal offences of trafficking in human beings (Article 113 of the KZ-1) and exploitation of prostitution (Article 175 of the KZ-1)**

**[[3]](#footnote-3)**

In the reporting year, the Specialised State Prosecutor’s Office did not receive any new criminal complaints for the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings as per Article 113 of the KZ-1. It did, however, receive:

* one criminal complaint relating to the criminal offence of the exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1 against nine natural persons and to the detriment of 31 female victims;
* two reports under Article 148, paragraph ten, of the ZKP relating to trafficking in human beings, but one reported case did not produce reasonable grounds for the suspicion that criminal offences had been committed, and the second case did not constitute a criminal offence that is prosecuted *ex officio*.

In the reporting year, state prosecutors at the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office:

* issued one decision on dismissal against two natural persons for the criminal offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1;
* filed one indictment against three natural persons for the criminal offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1 committed to the detriment of one female victim;
* filed one request for an investigation against nine natural persons for the criminal offence under Article 175 of the KZ-1 committed to the detriment of 31 female victims.

Other district state prosecutors’ offices also dealt with specific issues relating to trafficking in human beings, as follows:

* the District State Prosecutor’s Office in Koper received one criminal complaint relating to the criminal offence of the exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1 and filed a request for an investigation on 26 May 2023, followed by an indictment on 20 July 2023 against one natural person and to the detriment of one (female) victim;
* the District State Prosecutor’s Office in Nova Gorica received one criminal complaint relating to the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings under Article 113 of the KZ-1 and filed a request for an investigation against one natural person and to the detriment of two (female) victims. The suspect was remanded into custody;
* the District State Prosecutor’s Office in Ptuj received one criminal complaint relating to the criminal offence of exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1 against one natural person and to the detriment of one (female) victim. In the reporting year, Ptuj District Court convicted one natural person for the criminal offence of exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1 to the detriment of one woman (conditional prison sentence and criminal fine, final decision). In the second case, the court acquitted two natural persons of the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings under Article 113 of the KZ-1, but the decision was appealed; separate criminal proceedings are underway, currently in the main hearing stage;
* the District State Prosecutor’s Office in Ljubljana filed two indictments relating to the criminal offence of exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1, i.e. one indictment against two natural persons to the detriment of one (female) victim and one indictment against one natural person to the detriment of one (female) victim;
* the District Public Prosecutor’s Office in Ljubljana received two criminal complaints relating to the criminal offence of exploitation of prostitution under Article 175, these against three natural persons. In the first case, a request for an investigation was filed relating to the criminal offence to the detriment of one (female) victim, but the investigation resulted in a statement of withdrawal of prosecution, no evidence having been found that the suspect had committed the alleged criminal offence. In the second case, a request for an investigation was filed relating to the criminal offence to the detriment of one (female) minor. In the reporting year, the Prosecutor’s Office also received one criminal report pursuant to Article 148 of the ZKP relating to the criminal offence of exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1 against one natural person. As there were no reasonable grounds to suspect that the suspect had committed the criminal offence, a decision of dismissal was issued.

**Court decisions**

At the time of reporting, four cases relating to the criminal offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1 were under judicial inquiry. One case relating to the criminal offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1 was in the phase of non-final indictment. Two cases were in the pre-trial hearing phase – one relating to the criminal offence under Article 175 of the KZ-1 and one under Article 113 of the KZ-1–, two cases were in the main hearing phase – one relating to the criminal offence under Article 175 of the KZ-1 and one under Articles 113 and 175 of the KZ-1 (in the part pertaining to the legal entity, the indictment was withdrawn because the legal entity had ceased operations) –, and one case relating to criminal offences under Articles 113 113 and 175 of the KZ-1 was on retrial. Courts of first instance issued one decision of conviction relating to the criminal offence of exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the KZ-1 against one natural person and to the detriment of two female victims.

In the reporting year, a higher court upheld the acquittal relating to the criminal offence under Article 113 of the KZ-1. The Supreme Court considered two cases relating to criminal offences under Articles 113 and 175 of the KZ-1, but its decision did not affect the case-law.

*Table11: Criminal proceedings and sanctions for the perpetrators of the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings in 2023*

| **Criminalisation of trafficking in human beings** |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of investigations launched | 1  |
| Number of indictmentsNumber of acquittals | 33 |
| Number of convictions for the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings | 0 |
| Number of convictions for using the services of a victim of trafficking in human beings | 0 |

**3.2.2 Findings of the Specialised State Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Slovenia**

Cases relating to trafficking in human beings are usually more extensive and initiated against several persons operating within an association, and in almost all cases covert investigative measures have to be used for investigation and detection. In view of the above, proceedings before the courts are also longer, especially the main hearing, which can last for several years.

Based on the relevant cases examined by the Specialised State Prosecutor’s Office, these criminal offences used to be accompanied by physical violence, restriction of personal freedom, and the victim’s illegal residence and work in the country. However, cases in recent years show that association members typically no longer need to use violence or coercion in committing crime. Victims usually have some personal freedoms and personal documents, they are allowed to use phones and the internet, have some of their own money, voluntarily enter into relationships with a criminal association, and often have legal permits to reside and work in Slovenia. Almost always, the victims of such criminal offences are foreigners, usually women and, in exceptional cases, minors. As regards victims of the criminal offence of exploitation of prostitution, the situation is essentially the same.

The common denominator of today’s traffickers is that they treat people as objects in the sense that they use their vulnerability or specific feature, trait or naivety with the aim of enriching themselves. The most common forms of victims’ vulnerability are unemployment, poor job prospects, low education, extremely low income, debt, the responsibility of taking care of underage children, having a disabled or unemployed partner, the responsibility of taking care of extended family members, serious illness in the family, the person’s naivety, and war.

The basic characteristic of trafficking in human beings is therefore the vulnerability of victims, who agree to a subordinate position and seem satisfied on the outside because they are at least earning some money, although the lion’s share is pocketed by the perpetrators. It is a way to support themselves and their children. The injured parties usually do not recognise themselves as victims, which makes the process of collecting evidence even harder.

Specialised state prosecutors dealing with the criminal offences of trafficking in human beings and exploitation of prostitution have established that the victims of these crimes do not actually perform the job for which they were employed. Often it is only a seemingly formal and fictitious employment relationship, one that has no genuine basis, either in terms of content or place of work, the length of working hours, the rest periods or rules on the payment of meals, or the reimbursement of expenses for coming to work and leaving work. Most often, they must withdraw their wages and return them, in full or in part, to their so-called "employer", i.e. the organised crime group.

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

Since 2016, the IRSD has been participating in joint EU campaigns against trafficking in human beings. In 2023, inspection was carried out of the implementation of labour legislation and legislation on health and safety at work at employers engaged in construction as part of the Joint Action Days (JAD), which took place from 10 June 2023 to 17 June 2023 and the purpose of which was to identify victims of human trafficking exploited in connection with forced labour and other forms of exploitation. The joint campaign involved the participation of representatives of the Police, the FURS and trade unions.109 employers were inspected, including two employers of Belarusian nationals.

Inspections were carried out by 25 inspectors, 16 in the field of labour relations and 9 in the field of health and safety at work.

Inspectors carried out a total of 312 inspections on labour relations and health and safety at work. They found 157 violations pertaining to health and safety at work and 42 violations pertaining to employment relationships. They issued a total of 25 administrative decisions, 12 payment orders, 39 decisions on a minor offence with a reprimand and 14 decisions on a minor offence imposing a fine, 12 warnings under the Minor Offences Act, two warnings under the Inspection Act, and one report of the criminal offence under Article 199 of the Criminal Code (undeclared work).

The IRSD continued to execute control over the employment and labour of foreigners according to the provisions of the Employment, Self-Employment and Work of Foreigners Act (hereinafter: the ZZSDT), the Employment Relationships Act (hereinafter: the ZDR-1), and the Transnational Provision of Services Act (hereinafter: the ZČmIS).

In 2023, inspectors found 77 violations of the ZZSDT, which was more than in 2022 (27).

Most violations, i.e. 49, were found for non-compliance with Article 7, paragraph four, of the ZZSDT, when employers allowed foreigners to do work other than work for which consent had been granted in the procedure for issuing or extending a single permit or an EU Blue Card or a written authorisation or for which a seasonal work permit had been issued. In three cases, however, violations were found of Article 7, paragraph five, of the ZZSDT, according to which employers involved in the activity of providing workers to another user, within the scope of the activity, may enter into employment contracts only with foreigners residing in Slovenia on the basis of an EU Blue Card, with foreigners for whom consent for employment, self-employment or work was granted in a procedure for issuing or extending a single permit or a written authorisation, or with foreigners who enjoy free access to the labour market in accordance with this Act. Inspectors also found three violations of Article 33, paragraph five, of the ZZSDT, which specifies that written notification is considered proofthat the employment condition is fulfilled if the foreigner starts working within 30 days of the written notification being issued. All conditions and elements of employment specified in the official information document must be complied with throughout the employment relationship.

In 15 cases, a violation was found of Article 36 of the ZZSDT, according to which an employer with posted workers can provide services related to the supply of goods and servicing, based on the notification of the start of the provision of services, only in specifically defined cases; in six a violation of Article 45, paragraph two, of the ZZSDT, according to which foreigners are obliged to keep their official information document, if one was delivered to them, or their seasonal work permit at their place of work and submit it as evidence in a procedure at the request of the competent supervisory authority; and in one a violation of Article 45, paragraph four, of the ZZSDT, according to which, during the period of posting workers to the Republic of Slovenia, a foreign employer shall keep the following documents at the place of the provision of services: the contract between the client and the service provider, a certificate of registration of the commencement of the provision of services, copies of the employment contracts (and their translations into Slovenian) for all posted workers and certificates of their registration in social insurance schemes on the basis of employment in the country in which the foreign employer has its head office, and health and safety at work documents (and their translations into Slovenian), which it shall make available at the request of a supervisory authority.

In 2023, inspectors found 68 violations of the ZČmIS, which is much more than in the previous reporting period (5). There were 39 violations of Article 12 of the ZČmIS, which determines the conditions for the transnational provision of services by foreign employers in the Republic of Slovenia, 21 violations due to failure to comply with the provision of Article 14 of the ZČmIS, because a foreign employer failed to register with the Employment Service of Slovenia prior to the commencement of the transnational provision of the service or failed to ensure that, during the provision of such services in Slovenia, the documentation specified in the ZČmIS was kept and made available at the request of the supervisory authority, and eight violations of Article 16 of the ZČmIS, which stipulates the obligations of a foreign employer and the posted worker or driver.

With regard to the exercise of the rights of workers temporarily posted to Slovenia under an employment contract governed by foreign law, inspectors found eight violations of Article 210 of the ZDR-1, which specifically regulates the status of posted foreign workers. In 2023, inspectors also identified violations of the rights of workers (both Slovenian and foreign citizens) posted to work abroad or to EU Member States by employers registered in the Republic of Slovenia. The provisions of Article 209 of the ZDR-1 set out the mandatory components of employment contracts of workers posted abroad by the employer. The contract must also contain provisions on the duration of work abroad, holidays and work-free days, minimum annual leave, the amount of wages and the currency in which they are to be paid, additional insurance for health services abroad, other income in cash or in kind to which the worker is entitled during their work abroad, the manner of ensuring and exercising rights related to payment for work and other benefits which are provided in a different manner under the regulations of the state in which the work is performed (but this must be within the scope provided in this Act or more favourable to the worker), and the conditions of return to Slovenia. In 2023, inspectors found 64 violations of Article 209 of the ZDR-1, which is significantly less than in 2022, when 115 violations of this Article were found.

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

In 2023, the FURS continued to deal with violations under the Prevention of Undeclared Work and Employment Act (hereinafter: the ZPDZC-1) and filed criminal complaints or reports for criminal offences under the KZ-1.

The FURS carried out 6,439 inspections of undeclared work, including inspections of employment of third-country nationals. Illegal employment of third-country nationals was detected at 62 employers for a total of 84 third-country nationals. Most irregularities relating to the illegal employment of third-country nationals were found in the sectors of construction (F), accommodation and food service activities (I), and trade (G).

In 2023, in connection with illegal employment of third-country nationals, 67 minor offence proceedings were initiated against offenders – legal persons – for violating the provision of Article 5, paragraph one, indent six, of the ZPDZC-1, of which, as at the end of the year, 58 minor offence proceedings had been completed and nine were still in progress.

In 2023, 58 employers were sanctioned in minor offence proceedings for violations regarding the illegal employment of third-country nationals. The total amount of fines imposed for the offence referred to in Article 23, paragraph one, indent five, of the ZPDZC-1 amounted to EUR 317,000, and seven warnings were issued to offenders – legal persons, employers and their responsible persons. Furthermore, 68 workers – natural persons, third-country nationals – were sanctioned for the relevant violation, receiving fines for the offence in the total amount of EUR 29,000 according to Article 23, paragraph three, of the ZPDZC-1 and issued ten reprimands.

In 2023, a total of 164 offenders were imposed fines in the total amount of EUR 346,000 for the illegal employment of third-country nationals.

In 2023, the FURS filed three criminal complaints for the suspected criminal offence under Article 199, paragraph one, of the KZ-1 (undeclared employment). For the suspected criminal offence under Article 196 of the KZ-1, the FURS filed 30 criminal complaints during the reporting period. Of these, 12 pertained to foreign nationals, while other criminal complaints were filed against Slovenian citizens.

During the reporting period, the FURS did not file any criminal complaints or reports on suspicion of committed criminal offences under Article 113 of the KZ-1 (trafficking in human beings).

**4. Assistance to and protection of the victims of trafficking in human beings**

Assistance for victims of trafficking in human beings was provided under several programmes financed by the Government and implemented by NGOs and humanitarian organisations selected through a public tender. In addition, the implementation of a project financed by the UNHCR and aimed at identifying and informing the victims of trafficking and/or sexual violence in the procedures for the recognition of international protection in Slovenia (PATS) continued in the year of reporting at the Asylum Centre.

**4.1 The programme "Providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings – crisis accommodation"**

In 2022 and 2023, the MDDSZ co-financed the project entitled "Providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings – crisis accommodation", which was implemented by Caritas Slovenia. The two-year project involved comprehensive assistance provided for up to 30 care days to victims (adults and children) in need of immediate withdrawal from a harmful environment.

In 2023, two persons were provided with crisis accommodation, namely one woman from Ukraine and one from Serbia. Both were treated as victims of trafficking in human beings under Article 113 and exploitation of prostitution under Article 175 of the Criminal Code in pre-trial proceedings and were placed in crisis accommodation for a total of six days.

Persons admitted to crisis accommodation are provided with accommodation, food, emergency psychological and social assistance, first aid, counselling, information about their legal rights, interpreting, advocacy, social activities, companionship, escort, security, assistance with returning to their home country, and material assistance. People admitted to crisis accommodation are provided with 24-hour availability of a professional worker; in addition, lay workers (two women and one man), as well as trained volunteers, work with them.

One professional was employed to work on the project with the assistance of lay workers, who were involved in the process based on their capacities. Because of the traumatic experiences of those admitted, lay people were actively involved only in operational tasks. A 24-hour phone service for the Police and victims of human trafficking was provided by the professional, with lay people on standby duty during her absence.

The professional received information about potential accommodation from the Police contact person on two occasions. In both cases, the location was prepared and the professional was on standby, but the admission did not occur.

The costs of the project financed under the contract by the MDDSZ (labour costs for one professional, labour costs for lay people based on the actual number of hours worked, the costs of days of assistance in terms of the number of accommodation placements and the costs of prevention workshops) totalled EUR 32,241.19 in 2023.

**4.2 The programme "Providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings – placement in safe accommodation"**

In the reporting year, the project "Providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings – placement in safe accommodation 2022–2024" was funded by the MNZ and implemented by the Ključ Society.

No victims of human trafficking were involved in the programme in 2023, and the project costs, co-financed under by the MNZ under the contract (100% of the salary of one professional employee), totalled EUR 29,599.80.

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

In 2023, the Ključ Society continued to implement the project "Reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings", which was co-financed by the MNZ with funds totalling EUR 11,760.

The project is intended for citizens of the Republic of Slovenia who have been treated as victims of trafficking in human beings abroad and for EU citizens and third-country nationals who have been treated as victims of trafficking in human beings in pre-trial or criminal proceedings in the Republic of Slovenia and legally reside in the Republic of Slovenia. The programme, which is a logical consequence of programmes for providing assistance to the victims of trafficking in human beings, is the first step towards leading an independent life free from violence, exploitation and violations of human rights.

In 2023, ten people participated in the programme, namely one from Madagascar, one from Colombia, two from Venezuela, four from Slovenia, one from Ukraine and one from Palestine. All were adult women.

They were provided with all necessary psychosocial support, assistance and support with documents, learning and job searching, escort to institutions, and integration in individual and group counselling activities.

In 2023, the MNZ published a public tender for the implementation of "Continued protection of victims of human trafficking" and the programme for their reintegration in Slovenia for the 2023–2026 period in the amount of EUR 150,000. The public tender was not successful and will be repeated in the first half of 2024.

**4.4 The project "Providing information to victims of trafficking in human beings, sexual and gender-based violence in the procedures for the recognition of international protection (PATS)"**

The PATS project is aimed at informing those seeking international protection about the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings. The project’s purpose is to raise awareness among those who in most cases do not realise the dangers and consequences of trafficking in human beings and to encourage them, with a suitable approach, to actively participate in preventing various types of exploitation. Its general aim is a more effective identification of vulnerable groups and potential victims of trafficking who find themselves in this situation in their country of origin, in transit, in Slovenia or later on the way to the country of destination. In the case of children and adolescents, the information is provided in a way that is appropriate and adapted to their age and level of development. If the UOIM suspects that a person is a potential victim of trafficking, they notify the competent institutions.

In 2022, interviews were conducted by UOIM social workers trained by the Ključ Society. As of February 2023, the PATS project activities have been carried out by the Ključ Society – Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The project is aimed at informing vulnerable groups of seekers of international protection and temporary protection and refugees of the traps of trafficking in human beings, sexual violence and gender-based violence and of the protection and help available.

By the end of 2023, information was provided to 457 people on an individual and 2,534 on a group basis. Activities were carried out at the annexes of the Vič Asylum Centre, in Logatec and at the Postojna Student Home, with participants from Ukraine at various locations.

**5 International activities and partnerships**

An effective fight against trafficking in human beings requires international cooperation, particularly with the victims’ countries of origin. Special attention is also paid to involvement in international organisations, which help member countries develop and implement effective anti-trafficking policies.

**5.1 International activities**

In 2023, the MDS TZL actively participated in various international events related to activities to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings.

**5.1.1 National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Anti-Trafficking Service of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia**

As part of Sweden’s Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Conference on Prevention Models to Address the Demand that Fosters Trafficking for Sexual Purposes was held between 29 and 30 March 2023 in Stockholm. The conference established that appropriate legislation was an important tool for reducing demand that fosters trafficking for sexual purposes, in addition to raising awareness of the public and target groups, such as children and young people, and training of professionals. Furthermore, the prosecution of these criminal offences and international cooperation in this field must be strengthened. To achieve all these goals, the political will to support measures with adequate funding and staff is of key importance.

The 23rd Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons was held between 18 and 19 April 2023 in Vienna as part of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (hereinafter: the OSCE), focusing on issues related to the protection of victims of trafficking and ensuring their rights. The conclusions of the conference stated that an efficient fight against trafficking in human beings requires political support at the highest level, as the adopted action plans are often difficult to implement due to the lack of political will. The participants also called attention to the necessity of simplifying bureaucracy as part of state referral mechanisms, which often deter victims of trafficking from cooperating with the competent authorities, which consequently leads to a decreasing number of convictions.

The EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms against Trafficking in Human Beings (hereinafter: the NREM EU) held a meeting between 25 and 26 April 2023 in Brussels. On the first day, there was a panel discussion on partnerships with international organisations on the topic of trafficking. On the second day, the panel discussion focused on cooperation with countries of origin and transit countries, the exchange of best practices in operational coordination, and projects financed and implemented by the Member States in third countries. This was followed by a high-level discussion, with presentations of the EU’s political engagement and anti-trafficking programmes financed by the EU in various geographical areas around the world. In the afternoon, the NREM EU was joined online by representatives of civil society to discuss national and transnational referral mechanisms that the Member States will be obliged to set up under the new proposal for Directive 2011/36.

The meeting of the Network of Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-East Europe (hereinafter: the NATC SEE) was held between 30 May and 1 June 2023 in Skopje, co-organised by the MNZ SPBTL in cooperation with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of North Macedonia. The meeting participants reported on the implemented and planned activities of network members concerning trafficking in human beings and discussed current trends and challenges in the region. They also discussed the proposed amendments to the EU Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, presented by the European Commission in December 2022.

The regular annual meeting of national anti-trafficking coordinators, organised by the OSCE and the Council of Europe, was held between 6 and 7 June 2023. The MNZ SPBTL representatives took part in the meeting via video conference. The discussion focused on strengthening the mandate and role of anti-trafficking national coordinators and rapporteurs, identifying and helping foreign victims of cross-border trafficking, and proactive activities relating to financial investigations.

A meeting of the NREM EU held between 6 and 7 November 2023 in Brussels featured reports by network representatives of the current situation in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, the latest trends and challenges, and the Member States’ current activities in all areas of work (prevention, investigation and prosecution, help for victims, and partnerships) in light of the implemented EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2025. The last part of the meeting was dedicated to a panel discussion on the online dimension of trafficking.

The international conference entitled Preventing, Combating and Responding to Trafficking in Human Beings in the Context of Migration was held on 7 December 2023 in Ljubljana. The event was organised by the Ključ Society, the UNHCR, the Council of Europe and the MNZ SPBTL, and the discussion focused on the findings and recommendations of the fourth cycle of 2023 for Slovenia and the execution of ECHR judgments with the aim of improving the identification of victims among applicants for international protection and migrants and improving access to services for victims of trafficking.

The European Forum against Human Trafficking for Forced Labour and Labour Exploitation was held between 7 and 8 December 2023 in Stockholm. The forum was organised by the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Swedish National Coordination against Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings.

**5.1.2 The Police**

In investigating criminal offences of trafficking in human beings, the Police exchange information with other EU Member States as part of their cooperation with Europol and with third countries in their cooperation with Interpol. In 2023, there were 35 exchanges of information. It also participated in investigations of the criminal offences of trafficking in human beings as part of the EU policy cycle for organised and serious international crime. As part of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), it also carried out activities from the 2023 OAP Trafficking in Human Beings.

**Participation in the activities of the 2022 Joint Action Days**

During the reporting year, the Police took part in three joint actions concerning trafficking in human beings (EMPACT THB).

Between 8 and 14 May 2023, the Police participated in joint activities of EU Member States concerning the prevention of trafficking for forced criminal activities and begging. Tighter controls were carried out to identify victims of trafficking exploited for the purposes of prostitution and sexual abuse, forced begging and forced criminal activities, and other forms of exploitation of victims of trafficking. One of the campaign’s aims was identifying people engaging in trafficking in human beings or committing other officially prosecutable criminal offences. The activities were carried out at border crossing points and inside the country in the territories of the Ljubljana, Maribor, Koper and Celje Police Directorates. While carrying out their activities, the Police did not identify any victims of trafficking.

Between 10 and 17 June 2023, the Police also participated in joint activities of EU Member States concerning the prevention of forced labour. The activities were run by the IRSD and also involved representatives of the FURS and the Slovenian Association of Free Trade Unions. The aim of the activities was to identify victims of trafficking exploited for forced labour or other forms of exploitation. The activities were carried out at border crossing points for international transport and the crossing point for air traffic at Jože Pučnik Airport in Ljubljana; they did not result in the identification of victims of trafficking.

In September 2023, the Police participated in the activities of EU Member States concerning online platforms and websites offering sexual services and recruiting victims for sexual exploitation by criminal associations. One of the campaign’s aims was identifying people engaging in trafficking or committing other officially prosecutable criminal offences using social networks, websites and the dark web for trafficking in human beings. The activities were carried out at the Dutch Police Academy and involved a number of foreign security authority experts.

**5.1.3 Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia**

In March 2022, an IRSD representative and a Police representative attended a preparatory meeting for the 2023 JAD in Leiden, the Netherlands, organised by EMPACT and the European Labour Authority (hereinafter: the ELA).

In April, a meeting of representatives of EU inspectorates and EU police forces on the topic of labour exploitation was held in Paris.

In October 2023, an IRSD representative attended a video training on trafficking in human beings and labour exploitation as part of the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement (CEPOL). Another IRSD representative attended a video conference entitled Boundaries and Frontiers in Human Trafficking in Vienna.

In 2023, the IRSD became involved in a programme of international staff exchange with the Netherlands as part of the ELA. Two labour inspectors and two representatives of the IRSD General Services took part in the international exchange.

**5.1.4 Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia**

In 2023, the FURS continued its cooperation in coordinated actions with the Police and other inspection services. They took part in a joint European campaign against trafficking in human beings, the JAD THB 2023, covering 96 inspections into construction and road transport. The FURS employees identified two violations of the ZPDZC-1 and one violation of the Road Transport Act (the ZPCP-2).

**5.2** **Partnerships**

Partnerships between organisations dealing with the prevention and combating of trafficking in human beings have been in place in Slovenia for several years. In dealing with individual cases of trafficking in human beings, the Police closely cooperate with the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office and NGOs and humanitarian organisations. A particularly close cooperation has been established with Caritas Slovenia and the Ključ Society, which are involved in Police procedures to provide the identified victims with information on the rights and types of help available to victims of trafficking in Slovenia. Cooperation with these organisations also covers the implementation of programmes for the provision of victims of trafficking in human beings with crisis and safe accommodation and the (re)integration project.

The Police also works well with the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, which regularly informs the Police of the findings of diplomatic and consular representative offices abroad on the issue of third-country nationals or on cases suggesting that jobseekers might become victims of trafficking in human beings.

Furthermore, good cooperation between the Police, the IRSD, the FURS and the Slovenian Association of Free Trade Unions continued as part of the JAD 2023.

Employees of the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office take part in various trainings on trafficking in human beings abroad and trainings organised for their employees by institutions involved in the MDS TZL.

**Summary**

In 2023, the MDS TZL carried out all key activities aimed at preventing and combating trafficking in human beings specified in the 2023–2024 Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

In terms of legislation and policy, the biggest change was the adopted amendment to the Criminal Code (KZ-1J), which, among other things, transposed the provisions of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. The amended Act supplemented the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings by extending forms of exploitation to begging and slavery-like relationships and treating criminal offences committed by an official or public employee when carrying out their duties as aggravated criminal offences.The ZOZKD-B was also adopted in 2023, expanding the right to victim compensation to third-country nationals.In the reporting year, Slovenia ended the third cycle of assessment regarding the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, and the MDS TZL presented the report and recommendations to the Government. The MDS TZL also prepared an annual report on its work and the 2023–2024 Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

In 2023, preventive activities continued, focusing on four target groups, namely the general public, target risk groups, potential service users and the professional community. Systemic awareness-raising about trafficking in human beings continued among children and young people in primary and secondary schools, with schools expressing greater interest in awareness-raising on the topic. In addition to traditional training of public employees whose work is related to the issue of trafficking, a new professional training was carried out for members of the Slovenian Armed Forces and employees of the Ministry of Defence, as was training for administrative unit employees working as registrars, with an emphasis on forced marriages.

As regards the detection, investigation and prosecution of trafficking offences, it should be noted that in Slovenia criminal offences relating to trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual abuse are still the most common. In 2023, the Police dealt with 16 suspects for 25 criminal offences of trafficking in human beings, identifying 21 victims and 60 potential victims of trafficking. Within their competences, the IRSD and the FURS also carried out activities aimed at detecting cases of trafficking in human beings and primarily focused on forced labour exploitation. In the reporting year, the Specialised State Prosecutor's Office filed one request for an investigation into the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings and three indictments for the relevant criminal offence. For the third year in a row, the courts did not pronounce any convictions for this criminal offence; three acquittals were issued.

Assistance to and protection of victims of trafficking in human beings as part of projects co-financed by the MNZ and the MDDSZ were provided by Caritas Slovenia and the Ključ Society in 2023. Two people were placed in crisis accommodation during the reporting year but neither joined the safe accommodation programme. Ten people participated in the reintegration programme. The PATS project continued to be implemented at the Asylum Centre to identify and provide assistance to and protection of victims of trafficking in human beings and/or sexual violence in procedures for the recognition of international protection.

As regards international cooperation and partnerships, members of the MDS TZL attended numerous events and conferences. The National Coordinator and the MNZ SPBTL attended regular meetings of national anti-trafficking coordinators as part of the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the NATC SEE and the NREM EU. Furthermore, the Ključ Association and the MNZ SPBTL, in cooperation with the UNHCR and the Council of Europe, organised an international conference on trafficking in human beings in the context of migration. The Police took part in three joint campaigns concerning trafficking in human beings (the EMPACT THB). Good cooperation between state authorities and civil society organisations dealing with the prevention and combating of trafficking in human beings continued.

1. iIn providing statistical data, individual persons are stated, which means that a person (whether a suspect or an injured party) is counted only once in the investigation regardless of the number of criminal offences concerning them. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The person was identified as a victim of the criminal offence of trafficking in human beings, but the pre-trial procedure later produced no grounds for filing a criminal complaint and only resulted in a police report to the Specialised State Prosecutor’s Office (Article 148, paragraph ten, of the ZKP). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Individual cases in the same reporting period are being dealt with at various stages, i.e. from the receipt of a criminal complaint or report to be supplemented under Article 148, paragraph ten, of the ZKP to the adoption of a state prosecutors' decision, i.e. to the filing of a request for investigation, to the filing of an indictment and to the issue of a decision on dismissal, only in individual parts. Given the above, the same case is often reported under the item of receiving a criminal complaint or report pursuant to Article 148, paragraph ten, of the ZKP, under the item of dismissal, under the item of filing a request for investigation, and under the item of filing an indictment. It is also possible that a state prosecutor’s decision in an individual case has not been adopted at the time of reporting against all persons charged. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)