



Trafficking in Human Beings – the International Dimension contribution of the Slovak Republic

EMN Study – Questionnaire Form
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This study was prepared within the activities of the European Migration Network (EMN) which provides up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum in order to support policymaking in EU and its Member States. EMN is funded by the European Union and the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

EMN activities are focused on topics related to migration of third-country nationals. The activities are implemented through national contact points in the EMN Member (EU Member States except Denmark) and Observer Countries (Norway, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, Armenia, Serbia and North Macedonia) in coordination with the European Commission (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs – DG HOME).

Elaboration of the study was conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Bratislava as the coordinator of the EMN National Contact Point for the Slovak Republic (EMN Slovakia). EMN Slovakia comprises of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium, the Migration Office, the Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior), the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (the Department of International Relations and European Affairs), the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (the Section of Social Statistics and Demography) and IOM.

This study – in the form of a questionnaire – was produced with the financial assistance by the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Equally, the opinions presented herein do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Government of the Slovak Republic or of the IOM.

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PREFACE

The primary objective of the study is to map and analyse policies and measures adopted by EMN Member¹ and Observer Countries² that contribute to addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings, focusing on the main priorities identified by the *EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025*³. The study covers the period 2021-2023 and does not include developments described in the EMN study⁴ from 2022. More specifically, the study's main objectives are:

- To map EU and national policies and measures addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings through prevention, prosecution and combating criminal business model, protection, and cooperation with international partners;
- To provide examples of good practices and identify challenges in addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings;
- To provide an overview of the main outcomes achieved in addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings; and
- To identify needs in current national responses to address the international dimension of trafficking in human beings and potential ways to address those needs as identified by EMN Member and Observer Countries.

Methodologically, the study is based on the analysis and summarization of available strategic documents and legislation, statistical data, the author's own knowledge, as well as information obtained from relevant actors in state administration (especially the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The study is focused on third-country nationals.

In the questionnaire below, the terms *foreigner* and *migrant* are used as synonyms for persons who are not citizens of the Slovak Republic. A term *third-country national* is used in the text if it is a foreigner/migrant who is not a citizen of any EU or European Economic Area (EEA) Member State.

Based on the questionnaire form of studies from EMN Member and Observer Countries, the European Commission prepares a synthesis report with key findings. The questionnaire form of the national study for the Slovak Republic, as well as the synthesis report, are available on the EMN Slovakia website www.emn.sk.

¹ All EU Member States except Denmark.

² Norway, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, Armenia, Serbia and North Macedonia.

³ EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/organised-crime-and-human-trafficking/together-against-trafficking-human-beings/eu-strategy-combatting-trafficking-human-beings-2021-2025_en, accessed on 20 January 2025.

⁴ European Migration Network (EMN), 2022, Third-Country National Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings: Detection, Identification and Protection, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/emn-study-2021-third-country-national-victims-trafficking-human-beings-detection-identification-and_en, accessed on 20 January 2025.

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CEPOL – European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
Coll. – Collection of Laws
EFCA – European Federation of Engineering Consultancy Associations
ELA – European Labour Authority
EMN – European Migration Network
IMPACT – European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats
EU – European Union
EU-LISA – European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
Frontex – European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GRETA – Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
IFRC – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM – International Organization for Migration
migration policy – Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until 2025
NUCIM BBFP PF – National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium
MoI SR – Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
NLI – National Labour Inspectorate
SR – Slovak Republic
TCN – third-country national
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WHO – World Health Organization

SUMMARY

The European Migration Network (EMN) study „Trafficking in Human Beings - the International Dimension“ was selected for preparation by the EMN Steering Board within the EMN's work programme for 2024. The study is for each participating EMN Member and Observer Country prepared based on common specifications – questions provided in the below text. From national studies the European Commission prepares common synthesis report with main findings.

The Slovak Republic (SR) was, from the perspective of trafficking in human beings, primarily a country of origin for victims until 2023, with Slovak citizens being exploited abroad. The overall statistics on trafficking victims for 2023,⁵ along with preliminary data for 2024 (as of October 22, 2024, there are 28 victims exploited in Slovakia and 12 victims exploited abroad), reveal a new trend: the number of Slovak citizens exploited in the Slovak Republic is predominant, indicating that Slovakia is becoming a country of exploitation. Over the past five years, sexual and labour exploitation have remained the most common forms of trafficking in the Slovak Republic. The number of foreigners identified as victims of trafficking in human beings in Slovakia remains very low. This may also be related to the fact that the Slovak Republic is primarily a transit country (in terms of migration) and only a portion of migrants passing through the Slovak Republic remain on its territory. This is reflected in the number of asylum applications submitted and assessed. In view of the above, it is assumed that Slovakia may also be a transit country in the context of trafficking in human beings. In 2021, only two foreigners were identified among the 43 total victims. In 2021, Slovakia recorded suspected cases of two other forms of trafficking in human beings: the removal of organs, tissues, and cells at the attempted stage, and the illegal adoption of a child.⁶

Over the past three years, there has been a rise in identified child victims of trafficking in the Slovak Republic — in 2019, children made up one-sixth of identified victims, in 2020 one-quarter, and by 2021 nearly one-third of all identified victims.⁷

From the perspective of statistical data on perpetrators of trafficking in human beings, in 2021, the SR charged 39 individuals and convicted 21 for committing the crime of trafficking in human beings. In 2022, three foreign nationals were identified as victims. In 2022, the SR brought charges against 34 persons and convicted 10 persons for committing this crime.⁸ In 2023, as in the previous year, three foreign nationals were identified as victims, including one person from a non-EU country, out of a total of 44 identified victims. None of these cases were related to the ongoing war in Ukraine or the irregular migration route to the EU via the Western Balkans. The foreign victims were intended to be exploited in Slovakia for forced labour and forced begging. One of the foreign victims, who entered the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, was also formally identified by the police. The number of victims with formal victim status in criminal proceedings who also receive assistance has remained very low for a long time, with only a few individuals each year. In 2023, Slovakia charged 18 perpetrators in 12 cases of trafficking in human beings and convicted 18 individuals for this crime. In most cases that year, the recruitment of victims was carried out through personal contact, as has been the case in previous years.⁹

The EMN study offers insights into policy frameworks, legislative and non-legislative measures, as well as examples of best practices relevant to the international aspects of trafficking in human beings.

In the first chapter, the study outlines policies and measures addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings.

⁵ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Situation Report on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Slovak Republic for the year 2023, <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality>, accessed on 23 October 2024.

⁶ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Situation Report on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Slovak Republic for the year 2021, <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality>, accessed on 23 October 2024.

⁷ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Situation Report on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Slovak Republic for the year 2020 and for 2021, <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality>, accessed on 23 October 2024.

⁸ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Situation Report on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Slovak Republic for the year 2022, <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality>, accessed on 23 October 2024.

⁹ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Situation Report on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Slovak Republic for the year, <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality>, accessed on 23 October 2024.

Key measures adopted and implemented during the 2021–2023 reporting period, relevant to the thematic focus of the EMN study, include the strategic document on trafficking in human beings, the National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019–2023,¹⁰ and the subsequent National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2024–2028¹¹ approved by the Government in 2023.¹² Another important strategic document in the field of migration is the Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with a view to 2025.¹³ After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, it was the adoption of the Contingency Plan of the Slovak Republic in 2022¹⁴ which aimed at solving the emergency situation in connection to the mass influx of the Ukrainian population to the territory of the Slovak Republic caused by the escalation of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine or the transformation of the national project with an impact also on persons fleeing the war, as well as the transformation of the national project with an impact also on persons fleeing the war. In addition to the specific policies outlined in the first chapter, we have also included information on project activities and measures designed to prevent and reduce demand that fuels trafficking in human beings. The first chapter further covers victim identification, protection, assistance, support, and empowerment.

Policies and measures to prevent and reduce demand are discussed in the second chapter. The Slovak Republic has implemented preventive activities specifically aimed at combating trafficking in human beings, particularly focused on the vulnerable group of Ukrainian nationals who arrived in large numbers following the outbreak of the war.

The third chapter explores the policies and actions of various countries concerning law enforcement and judicial responses, with a focus on dismantling the trafficking model. One of the ongoing challenges highlighted is the need to harmonize terminology and definitions used in the classification of trafficking crimes across different countries.

The fourth chapter focuses on policies and measures related to the identification, protection, and support of victims of trafficking in human beings. Despite the lack of practical experience in working with foreign victims, the Slovak Republic is making significant efforts to ensure the early identification of trafficking victims, develop policies and measures to prevent trafficking in human beings, and provide assistance and support to all victims, including Slovak citizens and foreigners (both EU nationals and those from third countries). The analysis carried out on trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation and violation of the provisions of the Labour Code, which resulted in the definition of appropriate measures, was also intended to contribute to the improvement of the processes. Additionally, significant changes include the amendment of Act No. 274/2017 Coll. on Victims of Crimes and Act No. 580/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance, as well as the amendment and supplementation of Act No. 95/2002 Coll. on Insurance.

The fifth chapter addresses cooperation with third countries and international organizations, while the sixth chapter highlights the challenges facing policies and measures. These challenges include the need to harmonize not only the national reference mechanism but also the European reference mechanism, establish secure communication platforms, and enhance collaboration and coordination among entities involved in protecting child victims of trafficking in human beings.

¹⁰ Government Office of the Slovak Republic, National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019 – 2023, <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/23297/1>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

¹¹ Government Office of the Slovak Republic, National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings 2024–2028, <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/28861/1>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

¹² The document emphasizes that protecting the fundamental human rights and dignity of trafficking victims, along with providing subsequent assistance, depends on early identification, particularly among vulnerable groups, such as foreigners, with a special focus on individuals fleeing war. It also includes the 2024–2028 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, which outlines assistance and protection in priority areas. A key strategic objective is to improve the identification of potential victims, particularly among vulnerable groups, with five out of a total of 19 measures specifically targeting these groups.

¹³ The document includes a dedicated section on trafficking in human beings that outlines specific objectives aimed at foreigners. These objectives focus on enhancing the competencies of state authorities to ensure a sensitive approach to identifying trafficking cases and addressing the needs of foreign victims. Additionally, it emphasizes the implementation of training programs for experts and professionals working with vulnerable groups to improve victim identification and prevent trafficking in human beings.

Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic, [Asylum and Migration - Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic \(minv.sk\)](https://minv.sk), accessed on 8 October 2024.

¹⁴ Government Office of the Slovak Republic, Contingency Plan of the Slovak Republic for Addressing the Emergency Situation Due to the Mass Influx of Ukrainian Population (October 2022 – March 2023), <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/27750/1>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND MAPPING OF POLICIES AND MEASURES

1. Which are your country's thematic priorities when addressing the international dimension¹⁵ of trafficking in human beings (e.g. prevention, demand reduction, awareness raising; victim identification, referral, protection, support, assistance and reintegration; disrupting trafficking routes towards the EU, tackling the criminal business model of traffickers etc.)?

For the purposes of the Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with a view to 2025¹⁶ (hereinafter referred to as the "Migration Policy"), the priorities of the Slovak Republic in combating trafficking in human beings include: a) strengthening the competencies of state bodies authorities to ensure a sensitive approach to identifying cases of trafficking in human beings and addressing the needs of victims among foreigners; b) consistently prosecuting perpetrators; c) consistently enforcing the provisions of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on the protection of the rights of victims of trafficking in human beings; (d) intensify cooperation with stakeholders at national and international level to provide assistance to victims as well as to prosecute perpetrators of the crime in question; (e) implement training programmes for experts and professionals working with vulnerable groups in order to better identify victims and prevent trafficking in human beings.

Specifically, regarding labour inspections, in the context of the international dimension of trafficking in human beings, this pertains to the enforcement of compliance with the prohibition of illegal work and illegal employment.¹⁷

2. Does your country target any specific third countries, geographic regions or third-country nationalities when addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings?

Yes. Prior to the conflict in Ukraine, the Slovak Republic's efforts to combat trafficking in human beings were not specifically targeted at any particular group of third-country nationals. However, due to the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine and the subsequent refugee crisis involving Ukrainian citizens crossing the Ukrainian-Slovak state border, the Slovak Republic has focused its efforts on Ukrainian nationals since February 2022. The National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium (NUCIM BBFP PF) is a specialized unit responsible for detecting, screening, and investigating trafficking in human beings. This unit has undertaken various activities related to trafficking in human beings, particularly in connection with the screening of complaints. Officers of the NUCIM BBFP PF monitored, screened, and investigated potential cases of trafficking in human beings, focusing particularly on all border crossing points with Ukraine and large-scale centres where there was a suspicion of Ukrainian citizens being lured with offers of transportation or employment to other European Union (EU) Member States, where they faced a risk of trafficking. Given the threat that individuals arriving from Ukraine may fall victim to various criminal activities, including trafficking in human beings, these individuals were warned about potential pitfalls immediately upon entering the territory of the Slovak Republic. In the aftermath of the military conflict in Ukraine, the Slovak Republic did not register any confirmed cases of trafficking in human beings among people arriving from Ukraine during the period covered by the study. Although the NUCIM BBFP PF investigated several suspicions and allegations, none were substantiated. The NJBPNM prioritizes prevention and continuous monitoring of this situation. NUCIM BBFP PF operatives engaged in daily communication with staff from NGOs and international organizations that interacted with Ukrainian citizens residing in the Slovak Republic. Additionally, the NUCIM BBFP PF

¹⁵ Under this study, the international dimension of trafficking in human beings refers to EMN Member and Observer Countries' efforts to address trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals towards their countries: a) in third countries of origin and transit of victims (and potential victims); b) in their countries, where these efforts have an international component e.g. imply involvement/cooperation with international partners, cross-border activities, target specific third-country nationalities/victims from certain regions.

¹⁶ Approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic by Resolution No. 496 of 8 September 2021.

¹⁷ This refers to the detection of instances where employers exploit dependent labour from individuals in violation of Act No. 82/2005 Coll. on illegal labour and illegal employment, as amended. Conducting labour inspections focused on illegal employment is closely linked to the fight against trafficking in human beings, as victims of illegal employment are at a heightened risk of being trafficked. Labour inspectorates also play a vital role in protecting children's rights by regulating the use of child labour, particularly in cases of "light work." They authorize, upon the employer's request and in coordination with the relevant public health authority, the employment of children in cultural and artistic performances, sporting events, or promotional activities. Illegal work inherently fosters poor working conditions and may lead to the exploitation of workers, which, in extreme cases, can result in trafficking in human beings. Source: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

maintained close cooperation with the National Labour Inspectorate (NLI) and the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family.¹⁸

In addition to Ukrainian nationals, from 2021 to 2023, the Slovak Republic focused on the identification and protection of victims not only among foreign workers in Slovakia but also among asylum seekers.¹⁹

3. Does your country have any specific policies²⁰ aimed at:

a) Addressing trafficking in human beings towards EMN Member and Observer Countries in third countries of origin and transit of victims and potential victims?

No.

b) Addressing trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals in your country? If yes, please provide the main details of the policies.

Yes. During the review period, the **National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019-2023** (referred to as the "NAP 2019-2023")²¹ is noteworthy. The NAP 2019-2023 serves as the fifth strategic document in the fight against trafficking in human beings. Its objective was to establish a coordinated system aimed at reducing trafficking crimes by narrowing the opportunities for such offenses. This approach takes into account current trends and developments in the field, focusing on both perpetrators and potential victims. To ensure comprehensive coverage of the issue, it was essential to enhance existing instruments that have demonstrated their effectiveness over the years, alongside developing new tools to combat trafficking in human beings that address emerging trends in criminal activity.²²

In October 2023, the Slovak Republic approved the National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2024-2028 (referred to as the "NAP 2024-2028"),²³ which integrates the issues of migration and the situation of foreigners. This programme includes an action plan comprising 19 measures and a comprehensive implementation strategy. Notably, it introduces a new focus area for the Slovak Republic: the establishment of systemic state policies aimed at reducing the demand for goods and services that may involve the exploitation of trafficking victims.²⁴

The current NAP 2024-2028 has enhanced the strategic objectives of its priority areas by incorporating new themes, such as vulnerable groups, including foreigners, and prevention measures in the online space.

The Contingency Plan of the Slovak Republic addresses the emergency situation related to the mass influx of Ukrainian citizens into Slovakia due to the escalation of the armed conflict in Ukraine, covering the period from October 2022 to March 2023²⁵ (referred to as the "Contingency Plan"). One of the strategic objectives of the Contingency Plan was to enhance attention and protection for individuals with specific needs, particularly unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities, and women who are victims of trafficking in human beings and/or sexual and gender-based violence.²⁶

The Migration Policy serves as the foundational document for the Slovak Republic, establishing the framework for a modern, comprehensive, and effective governmental approach to migration across all relevant sectors. It outlines key areas impacted by migration and references existing strategies and concepts developed for specific contexts. In alignment with the national interests and international

¹⁸ National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

¹⁹ Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

²⁰ 'Policies' refer to targeted strategies and action plans specifically addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings, as well as broader policy instruments that have an explicit anti-trafficking strand (e.g. one or more objectives of the policy refer to the international dimension of trafficking in human beings). Policies with indirect impacts on anti-trafficking efforts are outside the scope of this study.

²¹ Prepared in collaboration with governmental, non-governmental, and international entities, this programme was developed by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic and approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic through Resolution No. 495/2018 on 6 November 2018.

²² Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

²³ Government Office of the Slovak Republic, [Material detail | Portal OV \(gov.sk\)](https://www.gov.sk/material-detail/portal-ov), accessed on 8 October 2024.

²⁴ European Migration Network (EMN), EMN Annual Reports on Migration and Asylum in the Slovak Republic for 2023, <https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyrocnne-spravy-emn-o-migracii-a-azyle.html>, accessed on 4 October 2024.

²⁵ Adopted by Government Resolution No. 665/2022 of 26 October 2022 and Government Resolution No. 346/2023 of 26 June 2023, the Contingency Plan was updated for the period July-December 2023.

²⁶ Report on the implementation of the tasks from the National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019 - 2023, noted by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 24 April 2024, <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/29475/1>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

obligations of the Slovak Republic, the primary aim of the Migration Policy is to create conditions for legal migration while considering the priorities, needs, and reception capacities of foreigners, as well as their integration into society. Among its objectives, the Migration Policy emphasizes the effective fight against irregular migration and associated negative phenomena, including trafficking in human beings, smuggling, and the exploitation of foreigners.²⁷

The priorities outlined in the Migration Policy (see point 1) are grounded in the National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019-2023.

In 2021, **Act No. 217/2021 Coll., which amends Act No. 272/2017 Coll. on Victims of Crimes and related legislation, was adopted and took effect on July 1, 2021.**²⁸ This amendment to the Victims Act has fundamentally transformed the approach to compensation for victims of violent crimes, including those affected by trafficking in human beings. A significant change is the introduction of the option for victims of violent crimes to apply for compensation to the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic after criminal proceedings have been initiated. Previously, victims could only seek compensation after the conclusion of the criminal proceedings. Additionally, access to professional assistance for crime victims has been streamlined through the establishment of intervention centres.²⁹

The Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, governed by an internal regulation of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, ensures a comprehensive assistance system for all victims. This program includes specific provisions for victims who are third-country nationals. Additionally, the annex to the regulation outlines a set of questions designed to facilitate the identification of individuals eligible for the Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. This framework aids in conducting identification interviews, thereby contributing to the timely delivery of appropriate assistance and care. Each victim of trafficking in human beings is entitled to 90 days of care, referred to as a "recovery period." This period can be extended for an additional 90 days, allowing for a total duration of up to 180 days, depending on the victim's personal circumstances and formal situation, in the event that the victim does not cooperate with the law enforcement authorities. Should the victim choose to cooperate with law enforcement, assistance and support may be provided for the entire duration of the criminal proceedings.³⁰

4. In your country, are there any interconnections³¹ between national policies addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings and other policy areas (e.g. border management, asylum, migrant smuggling and irregular migration, fundamental rights, gender equality, organised crime, etc.)? If yes, describe these interconnections.

Yes. Within the Slovak Republic, there are connections between national policies addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings and other policy areas. The fight against trafficking in human beings is integrated into the following policy areas:

- **Border management, irregular migration, and smuggling:**

The fight against trafficking in human beings is incorporated into the **National Strategy for European Integrated Border Management 2023 – 2026.**³² This area is further regulated by specific tasks and measures outlined in a separate national strategy—the National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings, currently in effect for the period 2024-2028. In the context of border management policy,

²⁷ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with a view to 2025, [Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic - Asylum and Migration \(minv.sk\)](#), accessed on 8 October 2024.

²⁸ Section 2(1)(c) of the Victims Act introduced the concept of "particularly vulnerable persons," who are eligible for "specialised professional assistance." Victims can seek help from accredited organizations that provide support to crime victims, as stipulated by the Victims of Crimes Act. Law enforcement agencies (police officers, prosecutors) and healthcare providers are required to inform every victim about these resources, ensuring strict adherence to the principle of non-discrimination. Furthermore, victims have the right to compensation from the State, in accordance with the provisions outlined in the Victims of Crimes Act.

²⁹ National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2024 - 2028, approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic by Resolution No 522/2023, <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/28861/1>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

³⁰ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

³¹ Interconnections shall be understood as any cross-referencing in different policy areas e.g. border management or smuggling of migrants, for example where those include a work strand on trafficking in human beings or specific anti-trafficking objectives or indicators.

³² Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, National Strategy for European Integrated Border Management 2023-2026, <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=kabinet-schvalil-narodnu-strategiu-europskeho-integrovaneho-riadenia-hranic-do-roku-2026>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

the Slovak Republic actively collaborates with other countries and international organizations to detect and prevent trafficking in human beings at the external borders of the EU. Officers of the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police receive training on trafficking in human beings, which includes communication and procedures related to this issue, in alignment with international standards and national laws. Slovak authorities collaborate with foreign partners and EUROPOL in the fight against smuggling, which is often connected to trafficking in human beings. To strengthen legal frameworks and enhance cross-border cooperation, measures are being implemented to improve application practices.

- **Asylum policy:**

In the asylum procedure outlined in the Asylum Act, special emphasis is placed on the prevention and identification victims of trafficking, particularly among vulnerable groups of asylum seekers. Staff members involved in conducting interviews and processing asylum applications receive training to recognize the signs of trafficking. When a victim is identified, they are provided with specialized support.

- **Organised crime:**

The fight against trafficking in human beings is integrated into the broader efforts against organized crime and forms part of the criminal justice policy.³³ In 2022, the Ministry of Interior was approached with an initiative to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Trafficking in Human Beings with the Republic of Indonesia and actively participated in bilateral meetings. However, the MoU was not adopted during the period under review.

- **International cooperation and diplomacy:**

The Slovak Republic engages in active cooperation with international organizations and other countries to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. This collaboration encompasses the exchange of information, coordination of activities, and participation in international agreements and initiatives.³⁴

5. Has your country funded or implemented any measures³⁵ aimed at addressing trafficking in human beings towards EMN Member and Observer Countries in third countries of origin and transit of victims and potential victims? If yes, which?

No.

6. Has your country funded or implemented any specific measures (with an international component) aimed at addressing trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals towards EMN Member and Observer Countries in your country?³⁶

Yes.

Name of the measure: European Union Project from the Internal Security Fund: "Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Implementing Prevention Tools"³⁷ under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (implemented by the National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium)

Targeted third countries/nationality: The project aims to enhance the effectiveness of the fight against organized and, in particular, cross-border crime, including trafficking in human beings. It focuses on all victims of trafficking, irrespective of their nationality, age, gender, religion, or other distinguishing factors.

³³ Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

³⁴ Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

³⁵ 'Measures' refer to initiatives, projects, programmes and operational actions funded or implemented by EMN Member and Observer Countries in their territories or in third countries of origin and transit of third-country national victims that specifically address the international dimension of trafficking in human beings i.e. have a clear international component. The concept of measures also covers broader initiatives (e.g. on border management, asylum, migrant smuggling and irregular migration, fundamental rights, gender equality, organised crime and its online dimension) that have an explicit anti-trafficking strand (e.g. one or more objectives of the programme or a series of indicators refer to the international dimension of trafficking). Measures with indirect impacts on anti-trafficking efforts are outside the scope of this study.

³⁶ If your country has already provided information in the context of the EMN Study 'Third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings: detection, identification and protection' published in March 2022, please report only on any developments after 2021.

³⁷ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/mvsv_a_eu/simons/projekty/police/boj_proti_obchodovaniu.pdf, accessed on 8 October 2024.

Name of the measure: European Union Project from the Internal Security Fund: "Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Implementing Prevention Tools"³⁷ under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (implemented by the National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium)

Period of implementation: 2 September 2019 – 31 December 2023

Total funding and source(s) of funding: EUR 287,580.00 (EU sources 215,685 €, co-financing 71,895€)

Implementing partners: National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium

Beneficiaries: Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium

Objective(s): To enhance the effectiveness of the fight against organized crime related to trafficking in human beings while fostering and strengthening cooperation with partner agencies, including cross-border organizations, in combating this type of crime. The project aims to establish appropriate facilities for the interrogation of identified victims of trafficking and to implement tools and methods that streamline and expedite the investigation process and all related activities.

Main activities: The project involved the construction of two specialized interrogation rooms for victims of trafficking in human beings at the Operational and Investigation Departments of the National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium, located in Bratislava and Humenné. Additionally, the project included language courses, working meetings, and the provision of necessary equipment and promotional materials.

Implementation status: completed in 2023, two interrogation rooms built

Areas (select all that apply, relevant is marked with a cross):

- ☒ Prevention and reduction of demand that supports trafficking in human beings
- ☒ Identification, protection, assistance, support and empowerment of victims
- ☐ Law enforcement and justice cooperation to break the criminal pattern of traffickers

Name of the measure: National Project Funded by the European Social Fund under the Operational Programme for Efficient Public Administration, titled "Improving Access to Services for Victims of Crime and Establishing Contact Points for Victims"³⁸

Targeted third countries/nationality (If the measure does not target specific nationalities but rather third-country nationals in general, please specify): Ukraine

Implementation period: August 2022 – December 2023

Total funding and source(s) of funding: EUR 1,308,800.92 from the European Social Fund under the Operational Programme Efficient Public Administration.

Implementation partner: –

Beneficiaries: The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic received funding for implementation. The beneficiaries include victims of crimes among war refugees who have arrived and are staying in the Slovak Republic due to the armed conflict in Ukraine.

Objective(s): The objective is to respond to the evolving security situation in Europe and contribute to mitigating the negative impacts and threats arising from the armed conflict in Ukraine.

Main activities: Providing information and facilitating expert assistance tailored for Ukrainian refugees; Collaborating with entities and institutions focused on crime prevention, while enhancing partnerships with organizations specializing in support for Ukrainian refugees; Expanding regional platforms to assist victims of crime, including trafficking in human beings, at the regional level; Conducting educational and preventive activities specifically aimed at Ukrainian refugees, along with preparing information brochures and awareness-raising materials in Ukrainian; Establishing contractual partnerships with informal

³⁸ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, [National project Improving access to services for victims of crime and creation of contact points for victims, Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic - European Programmes \(minv.sk\)](#), accessed on 8 October 2024.

Name of the measure: National Project Funded by the European Social Fund under the Operational Programme for Efficient Public Administration, titled "Improving Access to Services for Victims of Crime and Establishing Contact Points for Victims"³⁸

interpreters, particularly university students, to help overcome communication barriers with Ukrainian refugees.

Implementation status: completed by 31 December 2023

Area (select all that apply, relevant is marked with a cross):

- ☐ Prevention and reduction of demand that supports trafficking in human beings
- ☐ Law enforcement and justice cooperation to break the criminal pattern of traffickers
- ☒ Identification, protection, assistance, support and empowerment of victims

Name of the measure: "Provision of Pre-Return Assistance and Assisted Voluntary Return for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings"³⁹

Targeted third countries/nationality: The provision of pre-return assistance and facilitated voluntary return targets all victims of trafficking in human beings, irrespective of nationality, age, gender, religion, or any other characteristic.

Implementation period: 28 July 2022 – 31 July 2027

Total funding and source(s) of funding: EUR 216,666 (state budget)

Implementing partners: The measure is implemented through a service agreement between the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Caritas Slovakia, which is responsible for delivering the specified services.

Beneficiaries: The Caritas Slovakia is the beneficiary of the funds for implementing pre-return assistance and assisted voluntary return. However, the actual beneficiaries of these activities are the victims of trafficking in human beings who receive the pre-return assistance and voluntary return services.

Objective(s): The purpose of the pre-return assistance is to identify the victim's needs and provide information about options for addressing their current life situation. This is aimed at obtaining the victim's voluntary and informed consent to return to their country of origin or last residence, while minimizing stressful situations before and during the transport. This process is conducted in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders in the country where the victim is located or to which they are returning. The implementation of pre-return assistance is designed to ensure the victim's voluntary return.

Main activities: Providing pre-return assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings in the country of identification; Ensuring voluntary assisted return of victims of trafficking in human beings to their country of origin or last residence, in the case of foreigners; Ensuring communication with relevant organisations providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings in the country of return; Minimising stressful situations.

Implementation status: ongoing

Area (select all that apply, relevant is marked with a cross):

- ☐ Prevention and reduction of demand that supports trafficking in human beings
- ☐ Law enforcement and justice cooperation to break the criminal pattern of traffickers
- ☒ Identification, protection, assistance, support and empowerment of victims

7. Has your country engaged in:

- a) Structured (bilateral and/or multi-lateral) cooperation with third countries of origin and transit for preventing trafficking in human beings towards the EU; breaking the criminal model of traffickers; and/or protecting, assisting, supporting, and empowering third-country national victims of trafficking?

³⁹ Central Register of Contracts, <https://www.crz.gov.sk/zmluva/6717216/>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

Yes. During the period 2021-2023, the National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium (NUCIM BBFP PF) engaged in cooperation through three joint investigation teams with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. These teams focused on investigating and prosecuting cases of trafficking in human beings for forced labour. Their efforts led not only to the identification of victims but also to the successful prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators involved. In 2021, the NUCIM BBFP PF initiated successful cooperation through a task force with the Federal Police Inspectorate for Combating Crime in Halle and the European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) at EUROPOL, based on a signed agreement. The task force was established to jointly investigate an organized cross-border group of perpetrators involved in trafficking Vietnamese citizens. In 2022, NUCIM BBFP PF officers continued their collaboration with the German police within the task force, focusing on the sexual and labour exploitation of Vietnamese citizens. As a result, a Vietnamese woman residing in Slovakia was successfully charged.

Foreign legal aid is commonly utilized in trafficking cases under investigation. Between 2021 and 2023, NUCIM BBFP PF investigators issued a total of 59 requests for foreign legal aid⁴⁰ to both EU and non-EU countries, during the period covered by this study.

b) Structured cooperation with international organisations for preventing trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals towards the EU; breaking the criminal model of traffickers; and/or protecting, assisting, supporting, and empowering third-country national victims of trafficking?

Yes. The Slovak Republic has long been actively cooperating with international intergovernmental organizations in the prevention of trafficking in human beings and in providing assistance to victims. This collaboration has intensified since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. While some of these partnerships are long-term and framework-based, others are implemented on a situational basis, and since 2022, they have specifically focused on addressing the impacts of the conflict in Ukraine.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a member of the Inter-Ministerial Expert Group on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings,⁴¹ an advisory, initiating, and coordinating body led by the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. This Expert Group is composed of both permanent and invited members, ensuring a broad collaboration between various stakeholders in addressing the issue of trafficking in human beings.

IOM has an Agreement on Cooperation with the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, which was established in 1998. This agreement enables the IOM to assist in the voluntary return of unsuccessful asylum seekers and irregular migrants, including victims of trafficking in human beings, to their country of origin. These individuals typically do not wish to participate in the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings or cooperate with law enforcement authorities but seek to return to their home countries. The IOM coordinates these returns through its network of country offices.⁴²

Long-standing areas of cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the IOM include prevention and training activities for various professional groups in the field of raising awareness of the risk of trafficking in human beings, identification of victims and assistance to these victims (some of which are described below).

Following the outbreak of war in Ukraine, several organizations, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), have established offices in Slovakia. Additionally, the World Health Organization (WHO) has bolstered its presence in the country. These organizations have initiated various forms of assistance for those fleeing Ukraine and coordinate their efforts through regular working groups and inter-agency meetings.

⁴⁰ National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

⁴¹ An inter-ministerial expert group has been established within the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, serving as an advisory, initiating, and coordinating body for the national coordinator in combating trafficking in human beings. The national coordinator is appointed by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior. The group's operations are regulated by an internal directive, specifically the Measure of the Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic No. 16/2021 on the expert group for the fight against trafficking in human beings, as amended. In accordance with the aforementioned regulation, the Chairman of the expert group establishes multidisciplinary working groups to tackle practical issues and tasks related to combating trafficking in human beings. The diverse representation of the members within the expert group ensures that the varied needs of trafficking victims are considered, allowing for the development and implementation of effective measures aimed at preventing and eradicating this crime.

⁴² Third-Country National Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings: Detection, Identification and Protection - the contribution of the Slovak Republic.

Another platform for inter-agency cooperation that has been actively engaging since 2022 is the Inter-Agency Refugee Coordination Forum, led by UNHCR. This Forum has established several thematic working groups and sub-groups,⁴³ which include representatives from state institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations. One of these is the Anti-Trafficking Task Force, led by the IOM, which facilitates the sharing of information, activities, and measures related to individuals fleeing the war in Ukraine. A significant portion of the efforts by international organizations in this area focuses on providing training and coaching for professionals who interact with refugees, as well as for the refugees themselves.

The Slovak Republic actively collaborates with the Office of the Special Representative of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, who also undertakes anti-trafficking initiatives in non-EU countries. In 2023, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, in partnership with the OSCE, conducted two workshops on trafficking in human beings. One of these workshops specifically addressed trafficking in the context of the humanitarian crisis stemming from the war in Ukraine.⁴⁴

During the review period, the Slovak Republic participated in Europe-wide action days organized by law enforcement agencies targeting organized criminal groups involved in trafficking vulnerable individuals. These Joint Action Days, conducted under the auspices of EUROPOL and FRONTEX, aimed to detect both the crime of trafficking in human beings and its victims.⁴⁵

The Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic collaborates with the European Union Asylum Agency, which has established an agency network of experts focused on vulnerable individuals,⁴⁶ including victims of trafficking in human beings. In the context of trafficking in human beings, one employee of the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior also acts as a national contact point with the European Union Asylum Agency for victims of trafficking in human beings.

The Directorate of Border and Foreign Police in Sobrance, of the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium, has conducted training sessions on trafficking in human beings. These sessions cover various topics, including child trafficking, sexual exploitation, communication and procedures at the border, and working with individuals who have specific needs. These training sessions were carried out in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.⁴⁷

The European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) serves as a vital tool for EU Member States to identify and prioritize threats posed by organized crime and serious transnational crime. This multidisciplinary platform fosters cooperation among relevant EU Member States, supported by various EU institutions and agencies, including Europol, Frontex, Eurojust, CEPOL, OLAF, EU-LISA, and EFCA. Additionally, EMPACT collaborates with non-EU countries, international organizations, and other stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. Under the auspices of EUROPOL, EMPACT programs are established to tackle priority areas of serious organized crime in Europe, aligned with comprehensive strategic planning by the police forces of EU Member States. Specifically, for the area of trafficking in human beings, the EMPACT program focuses on trafficking in human beings, in which the NUCIM BBFP PF plays an active role. This involvement includes contributing to the preparation of operational action plans, participating in joint action days, and engaging in collaborative projects initiated by the European Commission.⁴⁸

Awareness-raising efforts regarding trafficking in human beings primarily involve lectures and training sessions aimed at both professionals and the general public. These initiatives are conducted by both state and non-state actors targeting various groups, and they also promote the topic through diverse media channels. From 2021 to 2023, the National Labour Inspectorate, in collaboration with the IOM, organized and executed training sessions for the labour inspection system on trafficking in human beings. These trainings were delivered in both online and in-person formats at the respective labour inspectorates.⁴⁹

⁴³ UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10785>, accessed on 4 October 2024.

⁴⁴ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

⁴⁵ National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

⁴⁶ Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic

⁴⁷ Report on the implementation of the tasks from the National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019 - 2023, noted by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 24 April 2024, <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/29475/1>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

⁴⁸ National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

SECTION 2: POLICIES AND MEASURES RELATED TO PREVENTING AND REDUCING THE DEMAND THAT FOSTERS TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

8. Has your country identified any challenges in relation to policies and measures aimed at:

- a) Preventing trafficking in human beings towards EMN Member and Observer Countries in third countries of origin and transit of victims (and potential victims) (e.g. challenges in identifying/targeting victims/potential victims for awareness raising campaigns; challenges posed by existing social and cultural norms; challenges posed by restrictions derived from the Covid-19 pandemic, etc.)?

No.

- b) Preventing and reducing the demand for trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals within your country (e.g. challenges in ensuring training for authorities or first line responders; challenges in identifying/targeting consumers/potential consumers of services derived from different forms of trafficking for awareness raising campaigns; challenges posed by restrictions derived from Covid-19 pandemic, etc.)?

Yes. The Slovak Republic identifies the low rate of victim identification among foreign nationals as a significant challenge, a concern highlighted by various international monitoring bodies. These include the Group of Experts of the Council of Europe, which evaluates the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), as well as the U.S. administration, which assesses the situation in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report).

Evaluating mechanism of the Council of Europe for the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings within the 3rd evaluation round of the SR, which took place in the years 2018 - 2024 and focused on the access of victims of trafficking in human beings to justice, identified several recommendations aimed at foreigners. These included, in particular, the following recommendations with progress report:

- Providing information in an understandable language: Interpreters and cultural mediators are used in proceedings according to the relevant laws.
- Informing about the right to a recovery and reflection period and the right to temporary residence, as well as the possibilities of providing legal aid and the right to compensation: The recovery and reflection period is incorporated into the internal regulation of the Ministry of Interior of the SR on providing the support and protection program for victims of trafficking in human beings and is part of the information given to the victim before entering the mentioned support program, and this period is provided to all victims who enter the program. Provisions on temporary residence (tolerated stay) are enshrined in the Act on the Residence of Foreigners.⁵⁰
- Creating suitable job opportunities for all victims of trafficking in human beings, including foreigners: The Employment Services Act⁵¹ stipulates that third-country nationals, who have been granted extended tolerated stay because they are victims of trafficking in human beings, have the possibility to enter the Slovak labour market without a confirmation of the possibility of occupying a vacant position corresponding to highly qualified employment, a confirmation of the possibility of occupying a vacant position, or without an employment permit.
- Allowing all victims of trafficking in human beings, including irregular migrants, to exercise their right to compensation, by ensuring access to legal aid and legal assistance in initiating criminal proceedings: The Act on Victims of Crime⁵² guarantees the right to information, the right to professional assistance (including legal aid), the right to protection against secondary victimization or repeat victimization, and the right to compensation for every victim of trafficking in human beings. In 2021, the Act on Victims of Crime was amended with effect from 1 July, 2021, fundamentally changing the philosophy of compensating victims of violent crimes, who can apply to the Ministry of Justice for compensation already after the initiation of criminal prosecution.
- Ensuring adherence to the provision on non-punishment, extending its scope so that it covers all offenses that victims of trafficking in human beings were forced to commit, including administrative

⁵⁰ Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on the Residence of Foreigners and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts.

⁵¹ § 23a (a, c) of Act No. 5/2003 Coll. on Employment Services and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts.

⁵² Act No. 274/2017 Coll. on Victims of Crime and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts.

offenses and offenses related to immigration: The issue is addressed in the Criminal Procedure Code⁵³ and the Act on the Residence of Foreigners⁵⁴, with the need to amend the Act on Offences⁵⁵, the amendment of which should incorporate the change relating to the non-punishment of victims of trafficking in human beings and is expected to take place in 2025.

- Strengthening the monitoring of foreign companies that send workers to the SR: Monitoring of foreign employers who send workers to the SR can be obtained from the registration form of the hosting employer, which every foreign employer who sends its employees to the SR is obliged to fill out.
- Encouraging businesses that send or receive posted workers to ensure the protection of human rights: The recommendation is addressed by the Act on Illegal Work and Illegal Employment⁵⁶ and the Employment Services Act.⁵⁷
- Continuing efforts to prevent child trafficking while paying particular attention to unaccompanied children: At the time of the recommendation's evaluation in 2022, the SR stated that for children who were abused, physically abused, sexually abused, or were victims of trafficking, a group with a specialized program was established in the Centre for Children and Families in Sečovce and the Centre for Children and Families in Poprad. Centres accredited by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR for the performance of specialized programs were Centre Slniečko n. o. in Nitra and Náruč -assistance to children in crisis in Žilina.
- Sensitisation of labour inspectors and other competent officials involved in labour inspections about trafficking in human beings for the purposes of labour exploitation and victims' rights, and instructing them to adopt a victim-centred approach instead of an immigration control-focused approach: The recommendation is mainly fulfilled through the education of labour inspectors.
- Paying increased attention to identifying victims of trafficking in human beings among asylum seekers and persons placed in immigration detention centres: The recommendation is fulfilled by adhering to the procedures specified in the internal document of the Migration Office, which specifies procedures for identifying victims of trafficking in human beings, including a set of questions aimed at identifying an asylum seeker as a potential victim of trafficking in human beings. Training on trafficking in human beings is organized for staff of police detention units, but during the implementation of anti-Covid measures, these were not carried out, and for this reason, it was also not possible for the non-governmental sector, which provides lectures on trafficking in human beings to foreigners in police detention units, to enter these premises, creating a more confidential environment for identifying victims.
- Establishing a recovery and reflection period if there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person is a victim of trafficking in human beings, as provided for in Article 13 of the Convention, and ensuring that all potential victims of trafficking in human beings are offered an effective recovery and reflection period: The recovery and reflection period is incorporated into the internal regulation of the Ministry of Interior of the SR on providing the support and protection program for victims of trafficking in human beings. Legislative incorporation into the laws of the SR still needs discussion.

The number of foreign nationals identified as victims of trafficking in human beings in Slovakia has remained very low for an extended period. Between 2021 and 2023, only eight foreigners were identified, of whom five were third-country nationals. Notably, three of these individuals were third-country nationals who had been exploited outside Slovakia but were identified and provided with assistance and support within the country. This situation indicates a lack of practical experience in Slovakia regarding the identification of trafficking victims among foreign nationals, particularly in the context of labour exploitation.

By comparing the statistical data of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family on the employment of foreigners for the years 2021, 2022, and 2023,⁵⁸ we observe an increasing trend in the number of employed foreigners in the Slovak Republic. This indicates a risk of an increase in cases of labour exploitation and trafficking in human beings. In December 2021, there were 22,184 employed foreigners

⁵³ Act No. 301/2005 Coll., the Criminal Procedure Code, as amended.

⁵⁴ Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on the Residence of Foreigners and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts.

⁵⁵ Act No 372/1990 Coll. on Offences, as amended.

⁵⁶ Act No. 82/2005 Coll. on Illegal Work and Illegal Employment and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts.

⁵⁷ Act No. 5/2003 Coll. on Employment Services and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts.

⁵⁸ Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/statistiky/zamestnavanie-cudzincov-statistiky.html?page_id=10803, accessed 23 October 2024.

registered in Slovakia, in December 2022 there were 22,107 employed foreigners, and in December 2023 the number rose to 26,102. These statistics highlight the need for increased coordination at all levels of state administration, as well as among non-governmental and international organizations.

The most common purposes of trafficking in human beings in the Slovak Republic over the last five years remain sexual and labour exploitation.⁵⁹

9. Has your country identified any good practices in relation to policies and measures aimed at:

a) Preventing trafficking in human beings towards EMN Member and Observer Countries in third countries of origin and transit of victims (and potential victims) (e.g. awareness raising activities; educational programs; survivor inclusion, etc.)?

No.

b) Preventing and reducing the demand for trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals within your country (e.g. awareness raising activities and demand reduction initiatives in foreign languages or aimed at specific nationalities or regions; information campaigns involving/targeting the diaspora; cultural mediators, etc.)?

Yes.

I. In light of the war in Ukraine and the rising number of incoming Ukrainian nationals who are at a heightened risk of trafficking in human beings, the National Labour Inspectorate (NLI), in collaboration with the European Labour Authority (ELA), has translated a guide titled "*Legal Work, Legal Employment*" into Ukrainian. This guide is part of the NLI's campaign "*Work Legally, Work Safely*" (2020-2021) and aligns with the EU campaign promoting the benefits of declared work, #EU4FairWork. The publication offers essential information in a simplified and accessible format to help both employees and employers navigate relevant issues effectively. Given the current situation in Ukraine, the National Labour Inspectorate has also translated several key information on its website into Ukrainian,⁶⁰ covering topics such as working time conditions, holiday entitlement, and minimum wage. Additionally, the NLI has contributed to distributing the information leaflet from the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic titled "*The Slovak Republic is a Safe Country for You*".⁶¹

II. Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, from August 2022 to December 2023, the national project⁶² expanded its focus to include a specific group: victims of crimes among war refugees who arrived and are staying in Slovakia due to the conflict. The activities of the Information Offices for Victims of Crime were specifically tailored to support Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia. To effectively address the needs of victims from this population group, the staff at these Information Offices (including those focused on trafficking in human beings) was strengthened after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. This involved the addition of informal interpreters, who were Ukrainian university students studying in Slovakia and had the language skills to facilitate communication between the staff of the Information Offices and their Ukrainian clients. The role of informal interpreters was defined by the guidelines, specifying that their function was limited to providing informal translation and interpretation services, which do not substitute for professional services or work. Their involvement included direct interaction with clients at the Information Offices, supporting educational and preventive activities aimed at trafficking in human beings, and assisting in the translation of awareness-raising materials and information brochures into Ukrainian. The collaboration with

⁵⁹ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

⁶⁰ National Labour Inspectorate, <https://www.ip.gov.sk/mimoriadna-situacia-na-ukrajine/?ip=nip>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

⁶¹ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

⁶² During the review period, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic executed the national project "Improving Access to Services for Victims of Crime and Creating Contact Points for Victims" (hereinafter referred to as the "national project"). This initiative was designed to assist various groups of crime victims, including the elderly, victims of violent crimes, victims of hate crimes and extremism, victims of trafficking in human beings, and young victims. The national project ran from December 2015 to December 2023 and included the establishment of 16 Information Offices, which serve as contact points for victims. To ensure the sustainability of the national project's outcomes and enhance the protection, support, and assistance available to victims of crime and other antisocial activities, the information offices were officially established as an organizational unit of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, effective February 1, 2023. This change came about with the enactment of Act No. 458/2022 Coll., which amends Act No. 583/2008 Coll. on the Prevention of Crime and Other Antisocial Activities, along with further amendments. The establishment of these information offices is specifically legislated in the newly added provision of Article 7a of the amended act. Their primary activities and responsibilities encompass providing information to victims, facilitating access to professional assistance, collaborating and sharing information with organizations that support victims, and conducting awareness-raising initiatives aimed at enhancing victim protection.

informal interpreters proved to be successful not only in facilitating communication by breaking down language barriers and conveying service offerings clearly to the target group but also in alleviating any potential mistrust towards representatives of a foreign state authority. This cooperation significantly increased the number of clients from Ukraine seeking assistance from the Information Office and boosted the demand for educational and preventive activities tailored for this group.⁶³

III. The Slovak Republic places emphasis on preventing trafficking in human beings among asylum seekers, implementing targeted activities to ensure early identification of potential victims who may be particularly vulnerable. Information on self-identification as potential trafficking victims, along with details about available support options and contacts for relevant authorities, has been integrated into the asylum seeker's briefing. This information is provided to asylum seekers alongside other essential details about the asylum process, ensuring that it is communicated in a language the applicant understands. Every individual applying for international protection receives this information,⁶⁴ either in writing as part of the briefing of each asylum seeker, or orally through an interpreter, if necessary in the particular case. During the assessment period from 2021 to 2023, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic developed a self-identification leaflet for foreigners, which was distributed to all asylum facilities. This A5-format information leaflet offers guidance on self-identifying as a victim of trafficking and provides contacts for assistance in eight languages: Slovak, English, Romanian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Arabic, Chinese, and Roma.

10. Describe the main outcomes/outputs resulting from the implementation of policies and measures aimed at preventing, raising awareness and reducing the demand of trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals (e.g. number of people reached by trainings/awareness raising campaigns, greater understanding of risks associated with trafficking in human trafficking among potential victims; higher level of awareness on key issues related to trafficking in human beings; drop in the number of victims from a certain third-country nationality/region, etc.).

The main outcomes of the measures and activities outlined in question 9b, as well as those described in the text below under question 10, include a significant increase in awareness of the risks that can lead to trafficking in human beings. There has also been a strengthening of self-identification skills among individuals, as well as enhanced awareness of this issue among various professional groups who interact with third-country nationals. This improvement has bolstered their capacity to identify potential victims and ensure they receive appropriate, targeted assistance.

To achieve the aforementioned results, the Slovak Republic implemented several key measures and activities, including:

Enhancing Awareness and (Self-)Identification of Potential Victims Through Direct Contact:

- This involved making the services of Information Offices for Victims of Crime available in the consultation areas of large-capacity centres at designated times. These offices provided vital support to victims of crime among war refugees, focusing on improving the identification of trafficking victims. Through these efforts, the information offices successfully identified victims among war refugees, ensuring they received the necessary information and referrals for professional assistance.⁶⁵
- From August 2022 to December 2023, the Information Offices for Victims of Crime conducted educational preventive activities, including talks focused on the "Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings." During this period, these activities reached a total of 740 participants across 29 sessions. Additionally, increased awareness of the services provided by the Information Offices led to 121 clients from Ukraine utilizing these services during the review period. Among these clients, 3 sought assistances specifically related to trafficking in human beings.⁶⁶
- Awareness-raising and information lectures on trafficking in human beings were conducted for individuals in detention camps by a contracted NGO that provides services as part of the Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. Engaging with an NGO allows

⁶³ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

⁶⁴ Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

⁶⁵ One of the strategic objectives of the contingency plan was to increase focus on and protection for individuals with specific needs, particularly unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities, and women who are victims of trafficking and/or sexual and gender-based violence. To address this, the contingency plan specified that *"staff at transit centres and emergency accommodation will be available to assist identified victims of human trafficking as needed"*.

⁶⁶ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

third-country nationals to communicate more openly, potentially improving the identification of trafficking victims by alleviating their fears and fostering trust.⁶⁷

Raising awareness of the risk of trafficking in human beings and informing potential victims/public through information materials and campaigns:

- Materials informing about the availability of victim information services (including for trafficking victims, the three-part "Help for victims of crime"/"ДОПОМОГА ПОСТРАЖДАЛИМ ВІД КРИМІНАЛЬНИХ ПРАВОПОРУШЕНЬ"/ "ДОСТРАЖДАЛИМ ВІД КРИМІНАЛЬНИХ ПРАВОПОРУШЕНЬ"/ "ДОПОМОГА ПОСТРАЖДАЛИМ ВІД КРИМІНАЛЬНИХ ПРАВОПОРУШЕНЬ"/ "Help for victims of crime") have been translated into the Ukrainian language and made available online on the Ministry of Interior's website.⁶⁸
- In response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, in collaboration with specialized services, prepared a preventive information leaflet on trafficking in human beings in A4 format, available in two language versions (Slovak and Ukrainian). Due to the significant increase in foreign students studying in Ukraine, this leaflet was adapted into an information brochure and expanded to include additional languages: Slovak, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Romani, Russian, and English. The aim of all informational materials was (and continues to be) to protect refugees from Ukraine against the threat of trafficking in human beings. These materials were distributed both online and in printed format at all Slovak-Ukrainian border crossings, bus and railway stations, hotspots, large-capacity centres, Slovnaft a.s. petrol stations, and across all Slovak Labour, Social Affairs and Family Offices, community centres, district offices, client centres, and more. A diverse array of state, non-governmental, international, and foreign institutions operating in the Slovak Republic collaborated on this initiative, contributing to both the translation and distribution of the materials. Over 85,000 printed brochures were distributed. This informational brochure was also showcased by national correspondents at the OSCE meeting as an example of effective preventive measures in the fight against trafficking in human beings along the Slovak-Ukrainian border.⁶⁹
- On October 18, 2022, coinciding with the European Day for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, in collaboration with Slovnaft, a.s., launched a nationwide preventive campaign aimed at combating trafficking in human beings. This campaign was rolled out at 255 Slovnaft petrol stations throughout Slovakia, with the goal of reducing the number of trafficking victims. The campaign featured stickers placed on the mirrors of male and female restrooms, highlighting key terms related to human trafficking. Additionally, A5 information leaflets displayed male and female faces, providing details on self-identification for potential victims and contact information for assistance. The campaign materials also featured information in Ukrainian for those fleeing Ukraine, along with the telephone number for the National Helpline for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings: 0800 800 818.⁷⁰ The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic raised awareness about trafficking in human beings through national media, publishing a total of 21 entries on the subject. The campaign was carried out in both Slovak and Ukrainian, while self-identification leaflets were made available in eight languages: Slovak, English, Chinese, Ukrainian, Russian, Serbian, Romanian, and Romani.⁷¹
- The Slovak Republic actively supported and participated in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) "Blue Heart" campaign. This initiative aims to raise awareness about trafficking in human beings and sensitize the general public, ensuring that every victim is recognized, and that the community becomes more attuned to the signs of trafficking. The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic collaborated with UNODC to create visuals for both social media and print, featuring an individual of any age offering their heart to victims of trafficking, accompanied by the slogan "My heart for victims of trafficking." The campaign also received support from commercial cinema chains nationwide. Throughout October 2023, over

⁶⁷ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

⁶⁸ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, <https://www.minv.sk/?brozury-a-letaky>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

⁶⁹ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, accessed on 8 October 2024, [On the occasion of the European Day against Trafficking in Human Beings we launched an infocampaign at petrol stations, Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic \(minv.sk\)](#).

⁷⁰ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, accessed on 8 October 2024, [On the occasion of the European Day against Trafficking in Human Beings we launched an infocampaign at petrol stations, Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic \(minv.sk\)](#).

⁷¹ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

35 posts were shared on the "Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings" Facebook page, reaching an audience of 4,547 and garnering 5,572 views. Additionally, the "Blue Heart" campaign was prominently featured on the main website of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic⁷² and its social media channels, as well as on the social networks and main website of UNODC⁷³.

SECTION 3: POLICIES AND MEASURES RELATED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUDICIAL RESPONSE WITH A VIEW TO BREAKING THE CRIMINAL MODEL OF TRAFFICKERS

11. Has your country identified any challenges in relation to policies and measures aimed at enhancing the law enforcement and judicial response to trafficking in human beings towards EMN Member and Observer Countries:

a) in third countries of origin and transit of victims?

No.

b) within your country?

(e.g. challenges related to available data/exchange of data; administrative challenges; poor coordination/communication among relevant actors; different nature/mandate of actors involved; different definitions; challenges posed by restrictions derived from Covid-19 pandemic, etc.)

Yes. One of the ongoing challenges is harmonizing the terminology and definitions related to the crime of trafficking in human beings across different countries. Additionally, aligning definitions for terms such as potential victim, identified victim, and formally identified victim presents significant difficulties, particularly regarding statistical outputs and the provision of services for victims. The Slovak Republic considers anyone who is at heightened risk of being trafficked as a potential victim. Various push and pull factors contribute to increasing vulnerability, making individuals more susceptible to trafficking. Therefore, there is an emphasis on raising awareness and understanding of the risk factors and indicators associated with trafficking in human beings, along with information about available assistance options for these individuals.

The Slovak Republic considers any person who is reasonably suspected of having been trafficked as an identified victim. At this stage, the country is actively developing initiatives and has established a system of assistance for these individuals through the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. The only requirements for inclusion in this program, beyond reasonable suspicion, are the individual's consent to participate and a commitment to sever contact with the criminal environment.

A formally identified victim is an individual whose status has been confirmed by law enforcement authorities based on gathered information and evidence.⁷⁴

Both formally identified victims and those identified as victims of trafficking in human beings can enter the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, provided they meet the aforementioned conditions of consent and cessation of contact with the criminal environment. Additional assistance and support for victims is also available through the Act on Victims of Crime.⁷⁵

At the same time, interstate communication is viewed as a significant challenge on an international level. For instance, requests for legal aid can be quite time-consuming, making the process of obtaining information cumbersome. Additionally, there is a lack of secure communication channels for interactions

⁷² Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=svetova-kampan-modre-srdce-na-podporu-boja-proti-obchodu-s-ludmi-prebieha-aj-na-slovensku>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

⁷³ UNODC, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/news/2023/October/slovakia-joins-blue-heart-campaign-against-human-trafficking.html>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

⁷⁴ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

⁷⁵ Under Section 5 of the Act on Victims of Crime (Act No. 274/2017 Coll.), entities that assist victims are required to provide or arrange professional assistance. This includes general assistance for all victims and specialized assistance for those identified as particularly vulnerable. According to Section 6 of the Act, an entity providing victim assistance must ensure that, upon request, a victim receives general professional assistance without undue delay. In cases involving a particularly vulnerable victim, the entity must provide specialized assistance promptly and free of charge.

between the parties involved—whether bilaterally or multilaterally—in providing assistance to victims, such as during voluntary repatriation.⁷⁶

12. Has your country identified any good practices in relation to policies and measures aimed at enhancing the law enforcement and judicial response to address trafficking in human beings towards EMN Member and Observer Countries:

a) in third countries of origin and transit of victims (and potential victims) (e.g. capacity building and training of law enforcement and judicial authorities of third countries; cooperation through EU Agencies; early cooperation and coordination, etc.)?

No.

b) within your country (e.g. through law enforcement and judicial cooperation with third countries; secondment of law enforcement authorities from third countries; cooperation with EU Agencies; use of cultural mediators in procedures involving third country national victims; early cooperation and coordination; specialised trafficking entities/units; specialised prosecutors, etc.)?

Yes. The National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium (NUCIM BBFP PF), a specialized unit of the Police Force addressing criminal activities related to irregular migration, smuggling, and trafficking in human beings across the Slovak Republic, works closely with the prosecutor's office and international partner agencies. This cooperation focuses on operational police efforts within the framework of both bilateral and multilateral treaties and agreements. Police cooperation primarily focuses on the exchange of operational information essential for criminal proceedings and on coordinating joint operational activities and investigative procedures. Additionally, based on operational needs and circumstances, the NUCIM BBFP PF exchanges information regarding foreign nationals from conflict areas with Slovak police attachés abroad, as well as with liaison officers from foreign states operating within the Slovak Republic. Information channels through international police institutions such as EUROPOL and INTERPOL are also used.⁷⁷

13. Describe the main outcomes/outputs resulting from the implementation of policies and measures aimed at enhancing the law enforcement and judicial response to trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals (e.g. an increase in the number of arrests/prosecuted cases/convictions, number of joint investigations/actions and results of those actions; enhanced capacities among law enforcement authorities to fight trafficking in human beings; improvement in the exchange of information among law enforcement and judicial authorities from countries of origin/transit and destination, etc.).

See reply to point 7a).

SECTION 4: POLICIES AND MEASURES RELATED TO THE IDENTIFICATION, PROTECTION, SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT OF VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

14. Has your country identified any challenges in relation to the implementation of specific policies and measures aimed at enhancing the identification, protection, support and empowerment of:

a) victims trafficked towards EMN Member and Observer Countries in third countries of origin and transit (e.g. lack of training/specialised knowledge to identify victims; insufficient resources; administrative challenges; challenges with implementation of trans-national referral mechanisms; challenges to identify specific types of victims; challenges posed by restrictions derived from Covid-19 pandemic; challenges posed by the use of new technologies, etc.)?

⁷⁶ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic; National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

⁷⁷ The National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

Yes. In an international context, Slovakia views the lack of common, secure communication platforms within a supranational referral mechanism as a significant gap. This absence poses risks in sharing personal and other sensitive information about trafficking victims among support and assistance providers.⁷⁸

- b) third-country national victims of trafficking identified within your country (e.g. lack of training/specialised knowledge to identify victims; insufficient resources; administrative challenges; challenges with implementation of trans-national referral mechanisms; challenges to identify specific types of victims; challenges posed by restrictions derived from Covid-19 pandemic; challenges posed by the use of new technologies, etc.)?

Yes. An analysis focused on labour exploitation and violations of Labour Code provisions was conducted by experts across inter-ministerial and multisectoral levels. This initiative, arising from Task No. 17 of the Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019–2023 and implemented in 2022 and 2023, identifies challenges in improving the process for identifying trafficking victims, including both EU citizens and third-country nationals. Challenges include administrative obstacles due to the lengthy decision-making processes of relevant authorities regarding the assessment of illegal employment, as well as difficulties in identifying victims within closed communities of third-country nationals. Another issue is the limited awareness about trafficking in human beings and available assistance options. A 2020 study⁷⁹ highlighted that labour inspectorates see legislative barriers—such as the absence of a clear definition and legal characteristics of labour exploitation—as a challenge in detecting and identifying potential trafficking victims. Additional challenges include language barriers and a general distrust of government representatives among foreign nationals.

With regard to application practice for victims who are foreigners, other options of legal residence status (e.g., granting asylum) are used to legalize their stay than tolerated stay, which means that there is a lack of practical experience in the Slovak Republic with regard to the institute of tolerated stay for victims of trafficking in human beings.

As part of the aforementioned analysis, available on the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic's website, recommendations were made to address the identified challenges, with the following focused particularly on foreign nationals:

- Conducting systematic outreach in communities (including foreign nationals) with a focus on education and prevention to help individuals avoid becoming victims;
- Establishing a network of trusted contact points within communities (including those for foreign nationals) to help identify trafficking victims and refer them to support organizations and the police in line with the national referral mechanism;
- Applying Section 251a of the Penal Code in relevant cases as part of practical enforcement efforts;⁸⁰
- Continuing to offer education and guidance to both employers and individual employees, emphasizing the importance of adhering to favourable working conditions and the obligations under employment relationships for those working in Slovakia, as outlined in the Labour Code, as well as the need to comply with regulations governing the legality of employment;
- Expanding educational resources for third-country nationals interested in working in Slovakia, providing information in their native or otherwise comprehensible languages. This effort could involve other relevant Slovak authorities or extend beyond Slovak borders to reach the most common countries of origin (e.g., through media channels);
- Raising awareness among professional groups about the vulnerable position of victims, in line with national and European legislation;
- Conducting inspections with a particular focus on the employment and working conditions of foreign nationals in the Slovak labour market;
- Seeking solutions to prevent the concealment of employment relationships, specifically to discourage substituting employment contracts with alternative business arrangements;
- Finding solutions to penalize entities that engage in paid placements and temporary employment agencies for their deliberate exploitation of clients.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

⁷⁹ EMN Study: Third-Country National Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings: Detection, Identification, and Protection – Contribution of the Slovak Republic.

⁸⁰ Section 251a of the Criminal Code addresses the offense of unauthorized employment. Under this provision, offenders may face imprisonment for up to two years if they illegally employ a person residing in the Slovak Republic in violation of applicable laws, particularly if the victim is a trafficking victim.

⁸¹ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Analysis: Trafficking in Human Beings vs. Poor Working Conditions, <https://www.minv.sk/?aktuality-obchodovanie-s-ludmi&sprava=obchodovanie-s-ludmi-za-ucelom-pracovneho-vykoristovania-vs-zle-pracovne-podmienky>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

IOM Slovakia identified the inadequate control of employment agencies as a challenge. From its experience, these agencies are also intermediaries for job offers that show signs of labour exploitation or direct human trafficking. IOM Slovakia has also noted that the National Labour Inspectorate has been highlighting the lack of a definition of labour exploitation in Slovak legislation for several years, which results in insufficient identification of victims in this area.⁸²

The National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium (NUCIM BBFP PF) has also recognized the challenge of identifying potential victims on communication platforms and social networking sites, stemming from a lack of capacity and knowledge within the NUCIM BBFP PF regarding the effective use of information and communication technologies.⁸³

15. Has your country identified any good practices in relation to the implementation of specific policies and measures aimed at enhancing identification, protection, support, and empowerment of:

- a) victims trafficked towards EMN Member and Observer Countries in third countries of origin and transit? (e.g. cooperation with non-governmental organisations in third countries; support to reintegration of victims of trafficking; including with the aim of avoiding revictimization, etc.).

No.

- b) third-country national victims of trafficking identified within your country? (e.g. trans-national referrals; cooperation with the diaspora; voluntary return of victims of trafficking, etc.).

Yes.

- I. Adoption of legislative measures to ensure that foreign victims of trafficking in human beings are fully covered by public health insurance, facilitating their direct access to healthcare regardless of their residency status.⁸⁴
- II. Since 2013, based on an agreement between the National Labour Inspectorate and the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, synergy checks of business entities have been conducted to detect cases of illegal work and employment, as well as to enhance the effective identification of trafficking victims.
- III. The amendment to Act No. 274/2017 Coll. on Victims of Crime, effective July 1, 2021, allows victims of violent crime to apply to the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic for compensation after criminal prosecution has begun, rather than waiting for the final conclusion of the criminal proceedings. This option is also available to foreign nationals or individuals granted asylum, subsidiary protection, temporary refuge, residence, or tolerated stay in Slovakia, provided that the injury occurred within the country. To improve access to professional assistance for crime victims, intervention centres have been established.⁸⁵

⁸² IOM Slovakia.

⁸³ National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

⁸⁴ Identified deficiencies in the provision of comprehensive healthcare for victims enrolled in the assistance program, which previously limited them to emergency medical care only due to outstanding public health insurance debts, were addressed through close cooperation with the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic. As a result, Act No. 580/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance, along with amendments to Act No. 95/2002 Coll. on Insurance and other related acts, was revised. This amendment established conditions for the seamless provision of comprehensive healthcare through public health insurance for all victims of trafficking in human beings enrolled in the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. The law recognizes these victims as a special group of insured persons under the state, ensuring that any existing health insurance debts are disregarded during their time in the program, granting them access to full healthcare services. This amendment also clarified the eligibility for reimbursement of healthcare for foreign nationals granted tolerated stay as victims of trafficking in human beings enrolled in the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, until their removal from the program. The amendment to the Health Insurance Act took effect on January 1, 2021.

⁸⁵ Simultaneously, the adoption of this Act streamlined and strengthened the rights of victims of crime in alignment with the recommendations from the European Commission highlighted in the report by the Special Adviser on Victims' Compensation. This is especially relevant to the procedural obstacles that victims encounter when seeking compensation. The amendments to the law also addressed the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions, which referred to the document titled "European Union Strategy on Victims' Rights (2020-2025)." The adoption of this law has undoubtedly improved the position of victims of both human trafficking and related crimes. It has enhanced the timeliness of compensation and facilitated access to adequate professional assistance through the establishment of intervention centres.

IV. The network of providers for assisted voluntary returns serves as a model of good practice and exemplifies effective international cooperation.

16. Describe your country's main outcomes/outputs resulting from the implementation of policies and measures aimed at improving the identification, protection, support and empowerment of third-country national victims of trafficking (e.g. enhanced capacity of relevant actors to identify victims of trafficking in human beings; number of victims who received cross-border comprehensive short-term and long-term assistance; enhanced opportunities for reintegration of victims, etc.)

By implementing these measures, Slovakia has expanded the number of entities equipped with comprehensive training on the topic of trafficking in human beings as well as the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) procedures for reporting victims. This has strengthened Slovakia's capacity to enhance the early identification of trafficking victims.

In Slovakia, attention is focused on the specific procedures for identifying victims of trafficking, particularly among vulnerable populations. Staff working in shelters for foreigners receive ongoing training to address the unique needs of these individuals. Additionally, special care is provided for applicants requiring special procedural safeguards within the asylum process. Concurrently, the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior is dedicated to enhancing the qualifications of its personnel in this area. In 2021, all personnel involved in asylum procedures, including reception staff and employees at the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, received training on identifying potential victims of trafficking in human beings. This training was organized in collaboration with the National Rapporteur for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, a specialized unit within the Ministry of Interior. The training was conducted by the Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention, part of the Crime Prevention Department. A series of seven training sessions were conducted in small groups in Bratislava and Košice, attended by a total of 50 staff members from the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. Additionally, in March 2024, all personnel involved in asylum procedures received training on the European Union Asylum Agency's "Trafficking in Human Beings" module, which specifically addresses trafficking issues among applicants for international protection. Furthermore, between December 2023 and February 2024, several staff members from various departments within the Migration Office, as well as those working in asylum facilities, received training from the International Organization for Migration on "Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings in the Context of Humanitarian Crises." In addition to the aforementioned training, other staff members of the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic participated in sessions during 2022 and 2023 on "Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings and Identification of Vulnerable Migrants, including Victims of Trafficking." Over the past four years, the Migration Office has identified two potential victims of trafficking in human beings. Both individuals have been included in the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings.⁸⁶

The amendment to the Health Insurance Act⁸⁷ has established a framework for the seamless delivery of comprehensive health care through public health insurance for all victims of trafficking in human beings enrolled in the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. Additionally, the amendment to the Victims of Crime Act has broadened the options for compensation available to victims. For further details, please refer to paragraph 15(b).

During the reporting period, labour inspectorates, along with the Labour, Social Affairs and Family Office, collaborated with other public authorities and the Police Presidium to monitor compliance with the prohibition on illegal work and employment. As of January 1, 2023, there has been a shift in the responsibilities of the regulatory bodies overseeing this area, with labour inspectorates now serving as the sole enforcement agency for illegal work and employment regulations. Previously, the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, as well as local Labour, Social Affairs, and Family Offices, also held oversight authority in this area.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

⁸⁷ Act No. 580/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance, along with the amendments and supplements to Act No. 95/2002 Coll. on Insurance and various other acts, establishes the framework for health insurance in Slovakia.

⁸⁸ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

SECTION 5: COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES AND WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

17. Has your country identified any good practices in the cooperation with third countries of origin and transit of victims to: prevent the trafficking of third-country nationals towards the EU; break the criminal model of traffickers; and/or protect, assist, support, and empower third-country national victims of trafficking?

No.

18. Has your country identified any good practices in the cooperation with international organisations to prevent the trafficking of third-country nationals towards the EU; break the criminal model of traffickers; and/or protect, assist, support, and empower third-country national victims of trafficking?

No.

19. Has your country identified any challenges in relation to the cooperation described in questions 17 and 18?

No.

SECTION 6: NEEDS AND FUTURE NATIONAL MEASURES AND POLICIES

20. Has your country identified any particular needs in addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings? (e.g. any thematic areas not sufficiently covered; any nationalities that were not sufficiently targeted; needs in cooperation with some third countries/regions, etc.)

Yes. In the National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2024-2028,⁸⁹ the Slovak Republic emphasizes the necessity of enhancing the reporting of victims at the national level, noting the current lack of harmonization. Additionally, it points out the European victim referral mechanism's inconsistencies and stresses the importance of improving international cooperation, communication, and the effective exchange of information, as well as the collection of statistical data.

According to the Slovak Republic's 2023 Situation Report on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings,⁹⁰ a significant cross-border challenge is to enhance the identification of victims among foreign nationals who may be intercepted while in transit or are present in the Slovak Republic under various legal or irregular circumstances.

As the labour migration of non-EU foreigners to the Slovak Republic has been on the rise in recent years, it is essential to establish and enhance effective protection mechanisms against labour exploitation through policies, legislation, and practical tools.

Considering the multidisciplinary nature of the processes involved in identifying child victims—whether they are Slovak citizens or foreigners—it is crucial to strengthen the collaboration and coordination among all relevant stakeholders in the protection of child victims of trafficking.

The low number of victims involved in police investigations who enter the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings⁹¹ highlights the need for measures to maximize their participation in the program. Legal counselling, which can be offered through the program's services, is particularly crucial for victims during criminal proceedings, providing them with essential support.

In the international context, the Slovak Republic recognizes the lack of common secure communication (securely operated) platforms for a transnational referral mechanism as a significant shortcoming. This gap

⁸⁹ Government Office of the Slovak Republic, <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/28861/1>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

⁹⁰ Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Situation Report on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Slovak Republic for the year 2023, https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/mvsvr/obchodovanie_ludmi/vyhodnotenia_ppoo/Situacna_sprava_OSL_za_rok_2023_FINAL.pdf, accessed on 8 October 2024.

⁹¹ Specifically, the National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

poses risks in sharing personal and sensitive information about trafficking victims among the various actors involved in providing essential support and assistance.

21. Are there any ongoing discussions at national level on how future national and EU actions/policies could address identified needs and build on existing good practices? If yes, specify whether any follow-up actions were taken (e.g., changes in policies/measures; proposal for new policies/measures; negotiations of new cooperation agreements with third countries, etc.).

Yes. Some of the challenges listed in point 20 have either only recently been formulated or are longer-term objectives with more challenging implementation.

To enhance the identification of foreign victims who may be intercepted during transit or find themselves in various legal or irregular situations within the Slovak Republic, it will be essential to involve not only state and non-state authorities but also the public. This can be achieved through awareness-raising campaigns aimed at educating the community about recognizing potential victims of trafficking. Any suspicions can then be reported to the police hotline (158), the National Helpline for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (0800 800 818), or through contacts at designated Information Offices. One example of improving victim identification could involve the participation of executive police forces, as officers from the traffic police service have previously received training in the Slovak Republic. To effectively prevent labour exploitation in labour migration, it will be crucial to rigorously implement the findings from the 2023 analysis on Trafficking for Labour Exploitation.⁹² This analysis was conducted as part of the Action Plan's⁹³ tasks to clarify the distinction between trafficking for forced labour and poor working conditions. It reflects the collaborative efforts of a working group comprising representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the General Prosecutor's Office of the Slovak Republic, the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family, as well as the National Labour Inspectorate.

The implementation of secure communication platforms for the transnational referral mechanism is beyond the capabilities of the Slovak Republic. This issue was first brought to attention by the Slovak Republic during the meeting of national rapporteurs with the European Commission in 2016, coinciding with the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union.⁹⁴

The necessity of engaging all relevant entities in identifying child victims of trafficking in human beings—affecting both Slovak citizens and foreigners—has been addressed through robust cooperation between the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic and its subordinate bodies responsible for child protection and social welfare, in collaboration with the Police Force.⁹⁵ This collaboration led to an instruction issued by the Director of the National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium (NUCIM BBFP PF) on March 1, 2022, which established a system for the regular exchange of information regarding child victims of trafficking in human beings between the NUCIM BBFP PF and the relevant authorities.

Since 2021, the internal regulation overseeing the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings has mandated that investigators from the NUCIM BBFP PF — the law enforcement agency responsible for conducting criminal proceedings in trafficking cases — must inform the program service provider well in advance of any criminal proceedings. This ensures that an informative interview can be conducted with the victim regarding the program. If the victim chooses not to participate in the National Programme of Support and Protection for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings or declines the interview, their decision is respected. They will be given the contact details for the National Helpline for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings at 0800 800 818, should they reconsider their situation in the future.⁹⁶

To improve the quality of investigations into trafficking in human beings, the Prosecutor's Office of the Slovak Republic has planned training activities for prosecutors and judges, scheduled for implementation

⁹² Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation, available in downloadable materials at the [Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention, Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic \(minv.sk\)](https://www.minv.sk/), accessed on 9 October 2024.

⁹³ Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019 – 2023.

⁹⁴ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic

⁹⁵ Specifically, the National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

⁹⁶ National Unit to Combat Irregular Migration of the Bureau of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium.

in 2024 through a nationwide meeting of prosecutors. Additionally, training sessions are being organized in collaboration with the Judicial Academy of the Slovak Republic.⁹⁷

22. Is your country planning to develop any new policies or measures that address the international dimension of trafficking in human beings? If yes, provide reasons and drivers.

Yes. To ensure the timely identification of victims of trafficking in human beings among third-country nationals, the Slovak Republic has focused on the effective implementation of international documents and European legislation related to combating trafficking. As part of this effort, in 2021-2023, the SR worked on the preparation of a new National Programme of Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2024-2028 which was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on October 18, 2023, by Resolution No. 522/2023. The Action Plan includes measures specifically aimed at enhancing the identification of potential victims, with particular attention to vulnerable groups, including third-country nationals.⁹⁸

Facilitated meetings among representatives from selected ministries, NGOs, and international organizations have also played a significant role in the development of the National Programme.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ General Prosecutor's Office of the Slovak Republic.

⁹⁸ Government Office of the Slovak Republic, <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/28861/1>, accessed on 8 October 2024.

⁹⁹ Crime Prevention Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

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