

**Informationensuchen zum Bericht des VN-GS an die 78. VN-GV  
iZm der Resolution 77/194 „Trafficking in women and girls“**

- **Measures to address trafficking in women and girls, as per resolution A/RES/77/194, including on efforts to prevent and address the root causes that lead to all forms of exploitation of women and girls including through addressing demand.**

The Austrian Working Group against Child Trafficking is one of three working groups of the Austrian Task Force on Combating Human Trafficking. The Austrian Federal Chancellery coordinates the activities of the Working Group against Child Trafficking. The working group consists of representatives from the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Justice, representatives of the federal states (Länder) as well as international organizations, research institutions, victim protection facilities and non-governmental organizations.

The Working Group against Child Trafficking implements measures set out in the respective National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking. In particular, it deals with issues related to the identification and care of child victims of trafficking, the development of information material, training for competent authorities and institutions, the establishment of nationwide standards and a national referral mechanism for dealing with child victims of trafficking. These measures have already been part of the Austrian National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking 2021 - 2023 and are continued in the Action Plan 2024 - 2027.

As one of these measures, the working group has developed information materials that can be used in trainings for professionals that could encounter victims of child trafficking. The Working Group against Child Trafficking has developed and published a folder containing generally applicable indicators and risk profiles to facilitate the often-challenging identification of victims. The folder can be used in trainings and contains contact details of relevant authorities and organizations.

With regards to specific efforts to prevent and address the root causes that lead to all forms of exploitation of women and girls, Austria has significantly increased the **women's budget** in Austria **since 2022**. A large part of the funds is allocated to the protection and prevention of violence against women and to **measures to address root causes** that make women and girls vulnerable to human trafficking like sexual violence, gender discrimination, social exclusion and poverty.

The state-funded **(general) women's and girls' counseling centers** provide comprehensive advice on topics such as education or the labour market and therefore also address root causes that make people vulnerable to human trafficking. They also offer help in cases of violence and establish contact with a violence-specific counselling center. In 2023, the women's and girls' counseling centers have been expanded to 100% coverage in Austria, thus ensuring a structurally sustainable support service for women and girls.

To reduce the vulnerability of girls and (young) women to forced marriage, also **specialized counseling centers on forced marriage** in Vienna (**also including shelters**), Graz and Innsbruck are being state-funded. This makes it possible to identify cases of human trafficking in connection with forced marriage at an early stage and provide appropriate support.

In order to particularly counter the vulnerability of women and girls to become victims of human trafficking and to support female victims a nationwide "**Intervention Center for Trafficked Women (IBF)**" is being state-funded (*see more below under **Information on multi-sectoral services for victim-survivors of trafficking including any available data on access to such services.***) To prevent a relapse into trafficking, IBF also provides support for successful entry into the labour market. In recent years, support for women with disabilities and trans women and girls in particular has also been expanded, as well as support in taking steps towards an autonomous life.

**To address and reduce the demand for exploitative services** and thus curb exploitation, the framework conditions for these services (e.g. care or cleaning work, sex services, construction work) must be improved, for example by improving working conditions.

The basic precondition for this is a legal and punishment-free opportunity to work for service providers – and this holds true also for sex workers. Therefore, the unanimous expert opinion in Austria is that **indirectly prohibiting the offering of sex services by punishing clients** (independent of fault) **does not lead to a reduction in demand**, but rather creates an illegal market that increases the risk of exploitation for all sex workers.

In Austria, the comprehensive regulatory system of prostitution is therefore part of the national strategy to combat human trafficking. The **Austrian working group on sexual services** (a sub-working group of the Austrian Task Force on Combating Human Trafficking) **develops measures to improve the living and working conditions of sex service providers, to strengthen their rights and thus to counteract the risk of exploitation** of this particularly vulnerable group. An important aspect of this are the eight state-funded counseling centers for sex service providers in Austria, which do e.g. outreach work.

- **Impacts of conflict, crisis, COVID, climate change or other emergency contexts on the trafficking of women and girls and specific measures undertaken to address these risk factors.**

At the beginning of the Russian aggression against the Ukraine, the intervention center for trafficked women (IBF) organized an **information campaign "Be safe on the way"** on social media in 2022 for refugees from the Ukraine, including reference to offers of support. In addition, flyers and posters were designed and distributed at train stations and counseling centers.

Moreover, due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Criminal Intelligence Service Austria has taken several **measures** in the realm of information gathering, operations and prevention. For

example, a brochure/poster addressing Ukrainian women to alert them on the dangers of human trafficking was published and shared with women arriving from Ukraine.

- **Impacts of technology and digitalization on the trafficking of women and girls and specific measures undertaken to address these risk factors.**

Recruitment of victims has shifted from traditional methods such as face-to-face conversations, word of mouth or print media to the internet and social media such as Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, Messenger, Telegram, etc. Approaches to victims are either active or passive. Offenders actively search for their victims by creating for instance false job advertisements. In order to attract victims for sexual exploitation, they place advertisements looking for waitresses, bartenders, escorts, dancers in nightclubs or sauna clubs, erotic masseuses, etc. and make false promises. Without questioning or knowing what they are getting into, victims respond to these advertisements. Perpetrators passively seek out their victims by responding to job advertisements. This is the first step in making contact with the victims, and it allows the offenders to gain a precise knowledge of the victims' situation in order to offer them tailor-made, lucrative jobs.

In the well-known lover boy scam, vulnerable victims are also recruited via the internet and social media, where a kind of platonic relationship is developed through regular online chats. Once the victim's trust is gained, the aim is to travel abroad together to start a new life.

In order to counteract this scam and increase the number of victim identifications, the Criminal Intelligence Service Austria organized a one-day training course on the subject of "Human trafficking on the Internet" for criminal investigators from Austria's nine Provincial Criminal Intelligence Directorates (CIDs), in which two Internet experts and operators of the escort services platform [www.kaufmich.com](http://www.kaufmich.com) participated.

The most vulnerable group are minors, especially children under the age of 14. Minors are recruited to commit crimes (shoplifting, pickpocketing, drug offenses/sales) either through traditional direct contact (in person) or via platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Telegram or Snapchat. Girls, from the age of 15, are sexually exploited via dating and escort websites. Due to poor digital hygiene (no protection of personal information, mobile location activated, no privacy settings), minors are an attractive and easy prey for human traffickers.

In this context, one more cooperation was established with the providers of the platform [www.booksusi.com](http://www.booksusi.com), with the aim to gain more providers of sex service websites to work together in a network to combat human trafficking and to identify victims of human trafficking.

In the area of labor exploitation, there is a trend towards the recruitment of non-EU citizens (persons entitled to asylum) who are exploited for their labor by taking advantage of their predicament. Checks increased to intensify victim identification, and high-impact measures were taken across Austria in addition to the EMPACT JAD Labor Exploitation. Furthermore, measures are being implemented within

the project EU Support to Strengthen the Fight against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings in the Western Balkans (#EU4FAST-WB).

Information and communications technologies such as web crawlers are used in Internet and social media researches aiming on identifying victims and perpetrators. Furthermore, Austria regularly participates in joint EMPACT "HACKATHON" days of action against criminal networks that use websites, social media platforms and the Darknet for recruiting victims for sexual exploitation in the context of human trafficking.

Finally, in 2021, the IBF's contract was expanded to include additional services, enabling e.g. **online outreach work for early identification** and vulnerable groups. This working method has been strengthened and expanded in recent years and responds to the new digital conditions.

- **Measures to increase access to justice and to strengthen detection, protection of victim-survivors and prosecution of perpetrators.**

**The IBF's comprehensive support** helps to increase and strengthen access to justice and protection. The adequate support by the IBF - especially through the psycho-social and legal support for the criminal proceedings - makes a significant contribution to increasing the conviction rate. In order to ensure comprehensive support, the IBF's funding is adjusted annually based on inflation and case numbers.

Victim support on the side of law enforcement starts by identification (start of investigation) through specially trained officers of Criminal Intelligence Service Austria and the Provincial CIDs by asserting their rights under the Austrian Code of Criminal Procedure (victims' rights, victims' special need for protection, legal assistance in proceedings, etc.). There is a close cooperation with judicial authorities, NGOs and child-welfare services and, in the case of minors, youth welfare services. For high-risk victims, the Sub-Department for High-Risk Victims at the Criminal Intelligence Service Austria is available.

For all police officers in Austria, the ministerial order on nationwide responsibility for victims of human trafficking and on their detection and treatment is a binding referral mechanism. The binding ministerial instruction was adapted in December 2023 including a 30-day recovery and reflection period and is, in coordination with the Federal Ministry of Justice, being applied to potential victims of human trafficking (also in cases of doubt).

- **Information on multi-sectoral services for victim-survivors of trafficking including any available data on access to such services.**

In Austria, the victim protection organization LEFÖ-IBF is responsible for the protection, support and counselling of women and girls aged 15 and over (in consultation with child and youth welfare services) affected by trafficking of human beings, for that the organization is managing a counselling centre in

Vienna and four shelters on a secret address. In 2022 there were 8 girls and 2023 there were 7 girls between the age of 15 and 18 cared by LEFÖ-IBF. Some of the women and girls in care are accommodated by LEFÖ-IBF, while others are accommodated in other organizations responsible for children and young people, where they receive support from LEFÖ-IBF to help them become independent. The girls can also continue to receive support as adults, depending on their individual needs in relation to trafficking and ongoing proceedings. Concerning the psycho-social and legal support for the criminal proceedings there are no age-related restrictions on the facility's competence.

In 2022, 343 female victims and in 2023, 301 female victims were supported by the IBF.