



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
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**Report of Greece on the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly
Resolution A/RES/77/194 on “Trafficking in women and girls”**

Greece continues to adapt its policies to new challenges, in particular due to migratory flows and conflicts in its neighborhood, especially after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. For this reason, we have intensified our efforts to train the frontline professionals, enhancing their vigilance on the correct implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures at the country’s entry points and Reception and Identification Centers to identify and protect presumed victims of trafficking in human beings, especially women and children or unaccompanied minors.

The Government of the Hellenic Republic systematically works towards creating a solid preventive, protective and prosecutorial framework, necessary for confronting and eliminating human trafficking. Enhanced efforts have been made to respond to the problem, including legislative reforms, inter-agency coordination in identification of victims and prosecution, inter-agency coordination in victim protection, allocation of funding to the prevention and combating of TIP and implementation of awareness raising campaigns.

We would like to present to you the most recent developments in combating TIP that indicates the strong commitment of our country on the implementation of the UN Global Plan of Action to combat trafficking in persons.

Firstly, we will provide *general information* regarding the situation of human trafficking, as a result of cases investigated by the Hellenic Police during the period from 01/08/2022 to date.

Recruitment, trafficking for *sexual exploitation*, was the dominant form of human trafficking. The primary strategy employed in these incidents was determined to be taking advantage of the victims' weakness. The perpetrators targeted individuals who were weak, such as the unemployed, those with family issues, migrants, juveniles, etc., and made up claims about the kind of work, the pay, and the working conditions in order to obtain their consent to follow them to their "destination" countries. Also, the "lover boy" method was observed as a means of recruitment. Through this method, the perpetrators approached young women, formed an affair and then travelled together to the country of 'exploitation', where they expressed their intentions of exploitation. The use of the internet has played a key role in sexual exploitation cases. Perpetrators used the internet and social media, on the one hand to recruit victims, and on the other hand to catch customers by advertising the "erotic services" of the victims.

In cases of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of *exploiting begging*, the perpetrators and the victims belonged to the same (close and/or extended) family environment. In cases where the victims were minors, there was direct involvement of their parents either as perpetrators or by handing them over to third parties to beg.



The perpetrators exercised control over the victims through the using of violence and/or threats, through their constant presence in the places where they begged (and where they lived), and by concentrating the victims in a single place of residence and restricting their freedom of movement. The exploitation took place in city centers, metro stations, squares, next to shopping centers and generally in crowded places.

In the context of recruitment, trafficking for *labour exploitation*, exploitation of cattle/agricultural labour and exploitation of victims as '*surrogate mothers*' have been identified. The main method used to recruit victims was the exploitation of vulnerability. Perpetrators approached people who were in a vulnerable situation (unemployed, family problems) and used false promises (regarding the type of work, remuneration and working conditions) to gain their consent to follow them to the 'destination' country. The perpetrators exercised control over the victims by using and/or threatening violence, by threatening their family members, by restricting their freedom of movement, by taking away their means of communication and travel documents, and finally by creating a 'debt bond' (the perpetrators paid for the victims' tickets, accommodation rent, etc., thus creating a debt that the victims had to repay).

One case of recruitment, trafficking in human beings for the purpose of *removing organs* in connection with assisted reproduction was investigated. The perpetrators took advantage of the victims' vulnerability, recruited them, brought them to our country, subjected them to special treatment in private clinics for medically assisted fertility, extracted their eggs and then sold them for money.

A. Measures to address trafficking in women and girls

1. For the effective investigation of human trafficking cases, the Hellenic Police has set up Anti-Trafficking Units and Teams. At the staff level, the Public Security Directorate of the Hellenic Police Headquarters handles the issues of human trafficking, whose officers monitor the development of the phenomenon on a daily basis and, if necessary, intervene with targeted instructions - directions and organization - implementation of relevant trainings.

At the operational level, twelve (12) Anti-Trafficking Teams (across the country) and 2 Anti-Trafficking Departments have been established and are active in the Sub-Directorates for Combating Organized Crime and Trafficking in Human Beings of the Directorates of Security of Attica and Thessaloniki. The tasks of the anti-trafficking units are exclusively to combat trafficking in human beings, to prosecute crimes against sexual freedom and economic exploitation of sexual life in general, and to provide protection and assistance to victims, in cooperation with the competent social institutions and services.

The Anti-Trafficking Teams, among other things, deal with the investigation of cases of trafficking in human beings, seeking (depending on the "degree of difficulty" of the cases) the direct cooperation with the staff of the Anti-Trafficking Units. A continuous effort is made to provide specialized - updated - recurrent training to the staff of the above-mentioned services, regarding how to approach (presumed) victims - how to investigate cases of trafficking in persons. Officers of the Hellenic Police participate in numerous training activities, either as



lecturers or as trainees (both in Greece and abroad), regarding trafficking in human beings. The subject of trafficking in human beings is included in the curriculum of the schools of the Police Academy, and students are taught subjects related to the fight against trafficking in human beings in the context of courses, lectures and recurrent training.

2. The Hellenic National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking (NRM), administered by the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) and supervised by the Office of National Rapporteur (ONR), has expanded its impact through the development of various training activities targeting both national-authority and NGO staff, e.g. the Greek Asylum Service and the General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality among others, organized and delivered by the NRM team of experts.

In its fifth year of operation, since its 2019 rollout, the Hellenic National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking (NRM), administered by the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) and supervised/coordinated by the Office of National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking, has expanded its impact through significant developments, as follows:

-Gradual and steady increase in the number of cases reported to the NRM since its launching.

-According to the NRM statistics, gender, irregular movement and dire economic conditions are among the major risk factors for human trafficking. As a matter of fact, numbers show that the vast majority of victims of sexual exploitation reported to the NRM are women and girls, while the majority of victims who are third-country nationals are asylum seekers/refugees, having being exploited on their route to Europe. A high number of cases reported to the NRM, also, show that the exploitation of a person's vulnerable situation, including poverty and homelessness, is prevailing among the means reported to be used by recruiters.

-Publication of 4 annual reports, to date, presenting reliable data on victims' history of human trafficking (i.e. recruitment phase, transfer/transportation, reception and/or harbouring, exploitation phase and the specific circumstances, inter alia), as well as victims' current situation, including demographic data, information on protection services being or having been provided and on participation in criminal proceedings, which is required for the holistic assessment of each victim's vulnerability and the detection of additional needs (available here: <https://ekka.org.gr/index.php/en/ethnikos-mixanismos-anaforas-en>). All the above information is gathered and analysed in the context of reports received by EKKA, referring to both adult and child victims detected in Greece regardless of the place and time of exploitation.

-Continuous update of the NRM SOPs to be applied on a national level including all necessary steps in the process of detection, identification and protection of victims (available here: <https://ekka.org.gr/index.php/en/ethnikos-mixanismos-anaforas-en>). Specialised SOPs have been published for Health Care Units of the National Health System, as well as for the Reception and Identification Centres and other Accommodation Facilities for asylum seekers



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of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, tailored to their internal circumstances and specific needs, with the participation of those Agencies' representatives in the drafting procedure.

-Continuous update of the NRM tools, including the NRM Reporting Form, NRM Handbook and the Practical Guide for Frontline Professionals - Detection and Protection of Human Trafficking Victims (available here: <https://ekka.org.gr/index.php/en/ethnikos-mixanismos-anaforas-en>)

-Continuous support to front-line professionals provided by the NRM team of experts in EKKA; it entails day-to-day contact, provision of guidelines on all protection stages for reported cases and information dissemination with constant updates on the NRM operation and services available for victims.

-Provision of trainings and development of information material.

To date, 57 Civil Society organisations have joined the Hellenic NRM, along numerous state agencies that might detect, identify and/or provide protection services to a (presumed) human trafficking victim in their everyday practice. A list of all NRM participating actors is available in English here: <https://ekka.org.gr/index.php/en/ethnikos-mixanismos-anaforas-en>.

3. Moreover, the General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights (GSEHR) of the Ministry for Social Cohesion and Family is the governmental body for gender equality policies at all levels of social, civil, and economic life. It is the principal entity for preventing and combating of gender-based violence against women. It has developed and continues to implement the **“National Program on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women”** since 2010, which refers to all forms of gender-based violence (e.g. domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, trafficking in women).

GSEHR has integrated measures in the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2025 (Priority Axis 1/ Action 1.4.3: Prevention and combating of trafficking and prostitution-survival sex) such as: Campaign to prevent, combat and eliminate human trafficking for sexual and labor exploitation in populations on the move (migrant women, refugee women). Information campaign mainly targeted to the foreign population in Greece about the dangers of "survival sex" and information on agencies where a person can turn to for help. Preparation of a pilot study on the extent of "survival sex" in Greece in refugee and immigrant population, in Athens area. Meetings with Civil Society Organizations working with people that are pushed into "survival sex". Further to this, the GSEHR is making partnerships with other relevant stakeholders in order to raise awareness and to combat gender stereotypes and gender social roles.

The “National Programme on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women” is being funded by the National Strategic Reference Framework and will continue to be implemented in the next programming period (2021-2027). Within the framework of the Priority Axis 4: Integrating the gender aspect into sectoral policies, and in the Objective 4.3: Improving the position of women who are subject to multiple discrimination and social exclusion, an interagency collaboration among state relevant stakeholders is provided.



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Recognizing the multifaceted challenges faced by refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, as well as the gender dimensions of these issues, GSEHR initiated the establishment of a state mechanism and formed partnerships with other stakeholders to facilitate the integration of refugee women and their children into society. The organization also signed a cooperation protocol with relevant governmental bodies. The primary objective of the protocol was to establish standardized procedures for identification, referral, and accommodation. Additionally, it aimed to provide counseling services and activities for refugee women at risk or survivors of gender-based violence, as well as for refugee women heading single-parent families and their children. In collaboration with UNHCR in Greece, UNCHR conducted the "GBV Risk Assessment and the Participatory Assessment for exchanging sex" research. The research has been completed, and the data are currently being processed.

GSEHR, in partnership with UNHCR, published an informational leaflet titled *"I am here for you"* addressing women victims of GBV and their children. The leaflet was distributed in hot spots by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and translated into Ukrainian, Russian, and English. It includes a QR code linking to the GSEHR's webpage. The provision of SOS 15900 GBV helpline services, available in Ukrainian with the assistance of a cultural mediator, remains a key aspect of GSEHR's efforts.

Additionally, the GSEHR offers training programs on violence against women, including trafficking, to counselors working in Counseling Centers, Shelters, and the SOS telephone helpline 15900. These training sessions, organized by the GSEHR and the National Centre of Public Administration & Local Government (Training Institute), aim to enhance the knowledge and skills of frontline workers. Within the collaboration between GSEHR and UNHCR, trafficking was incorporated as a presentation session in workshops on "Gender-based Violence and Abusive Behaviors," conducted by NRM (National Referral Mechanism). The target audience included frontline professionals in protective and supportive services related to GBV, with workshops held in Athens, Thessaloniki, and Mytilini in 2023.

Nationwide awareness-raising campaigns on all forms of violence against women occur annually on November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. These campaigns utilize press entries, participation in TV and radio programs, social media spots, distribution of informational material, participation in events, and public transport publicity. Additionally, counseling centers and shelters organize special events.

The GSEHR releases the "Annual Report on Violence Against Women" every year on November 25th, providing a comprehensive overview of violence against women in Greece and reflecting institutional actions taken for prevention, combating, and elimination of this issue. The [4th National Report on violence against women](#) (in Greek) was published in November 2023, covering the period from November 2022 to September 2023.

As concerns children, it should be stressed that actions envisaged to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings and to protect victims are included in the **National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child (2021-2023)**. In the context of overseeing the implementation of initiatives outlined in the National Action Plan for the Rights of the Child, all relevant



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stakeholders submitted updated information on the progress of their actions to the National Mechanism for the Preparation, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Action Plans for the Rights of the Child in October 2022. This comprehensive reporting covered developments from the initiation of the National Action Plan until the conclusion of September 2022. A comprehensive assessment of the Action Plan was scheduled at its conclusion in 2023.

Part of this monitoring process is the integration of the National Action Plan's activities into the Annual Action Plans of the Ministries and the overarching government policy plan. This integration ensures effective oversight of implementation by the *General Secretariat of Coordination of the Presidency of the Government*.

Initiated in November 2022, the collaborative efforts of all members of the National Mechanism for Monitoring and Evaluating Action Plans on the Rights of the Child, including the active participation of children representatives, have commenced the preparation of the next iteration, the 2nd National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child (2024-2027).

4. The *Hellenic Diplomatic Academy* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pursuant to the suggestion of the *Office of National Rapporteur (ONR)* has included in the curriculum of the education of new promotion of diplomats special training (lectures and simulations) about the issue of TIP. Specifically, among other, the specialized programme focus on training young diplomats how to identify potential victims of trafficking when exercising Consular duties - visas applications etc. Furthermore, the Diplomatic Academy, every year, organizes 3-4 seminars for all the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including diplomats, on consular issues where the issue of combatting TIP, especially in women and girls, is one of the main subjects.

A training program has taken place at MFA (20-21/3/2024), in cooperation with UNODC, addressing to the competent personnel working in our consular and diplomatic missions. UNODC/HTMSS in collaboration with the Office of the National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking, the Hellenic Diplomatic Academy, NRM/EKKA are currently reviewing a curriculum on human trafficking for the Hellenic Diplomatic Academy, developed by UNODC.

On October 24, 2023, the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) of the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family, under the auspices of the Office of the National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking (ONR), of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the competent bodies for the operation and supervision of the National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking (NRM), respectively, organized in Athens a conference on the "*Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking in Greece: Legal Framework, Systemic Pathogenies and Prospects*", on the occasion of the 2023 EU Anti-Trafficking Day. In the conference intervened, among others, the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator of the European Commission, Ms. Diane Schmitt, representatives of European and International Organizations (UNODC, OSCE, ODIHR/OSCE, ISTAC ODIHR/OSCE), Hellenic Police, the judicial system, representatives of NGOs and professors with systematic involvement in the issue of combating human trafficking.



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Finally, the Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings (ONR) and NRM/EKKA, in cooperation with OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB), co-organized a workshop on “Unconditional access to services for victims of trafficking in human beings” (Social Path Workshop) in Athens, (14-15/2/2024) with representatives of state/governmental agencies, NGOs and IO’s.

5. On July 2023 the *General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection* (GSVPIP) was established within the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, superseding the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors. GSVPIP’s competences are in line with Law 4939/2022 which identifies as vulnerable all third country nationals belonging to the following categories, i.e. unaccompanied and non-unaccompanied minors, immediate relatives of shipwreck victims (parents, siblings, children and spouses), people with disabilities, elderly people, pregnant women, single-parent families with minor children, victims of trafficking in human beings, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental and psychological disabilities and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of genital mutilation. At the time being the enhanced establishment plan covering the aforementioned vulnerable groups is under development thus further and more detailed information will be provided in the future. However, the dedication of a particular General Secretariat to vulnerable Third Country Nationals, including victims of TIP is a promising practice, as a crucial precondition to mainstream protection in the Ministry’s policy.

The institutional safeguarding and shielding of the rights of unaccompanied minors, particularly at risk of exploitation due to their minority and lack of network, is one of the fundamental objectives and fields of action of the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. Towards this exact direction aims the operation of the Institutional Protection Unit, the responsibilities of which include the coordination of the actions of services and agencies, state and non-state, involved in issues of child protection, such as housing, health, education, intervention in child protection issues, such as the age determination process, all administrative procedures which are required for access to insurance and health, as well as enhancing access to their rights, establishing a uniform process for assessing best interests and protection from abuse and violence. At the same time, through the broader supervision exercised and the continuous contact and feedback carried out with the above bodies and services, it is possible to identify institutional gaps and consequently to fill them by initiating the appropriate actions. Inextricably linked to the institutional defence of the best interests of unaccompanied minors is the adoption of the corresponding legislative initiatives and interventions. To this end, the above Unit both recommends the adoption of legislative and administrative measures that promote the priorities of the National Strategy for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors, and provides general information and opinions on provisions that should be included in a law or regulatory act concerning or affecting the protection of unaccompanied children. In this context, the provision for the granting of a ten-year residence permit to adults, formerly unaccompanied minors, upon successful completion of three classes of secondary education



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in a Greek school up to the age of 23 was included in the new Migration Code (Article 161 of Law 5038/2023). In addition, the Institutional Protection Unit deals with individual cases of unaccompanied minors requiring special attention and treatment by providing information and guidelines and liaising with the relevant competent bodies and services.

Guardianship

The General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection oversees the guardianship of unaccompanied and separated minors in the country, an important measure to prevent phenomena of exploitation and various risks for unaccompanied children. It aims to ensure their well-being and protection by implementing a flexible model tailored to their needs. As part of the European Guardianship Network, funded by the European Commission and Dutch organization Nidos, it collaborates with similar bodies across EU Member States to exchange best practices and address issues. Under the National Guardianship System, the General Secretariat coordinates with prosecuting authorities to appoint non-profit entities specializing in child protection as guardians. These guardians, supported by "guardianship mandated persons," ensure the minors' needs are met. A coordinator role adds oversight and accountability. Starting in 2024, the program aims to provide guardianship services to approximately 2,700 unaccompanied minors through 180 guardianship mandated persons, with the potential for extension. Local NGOs METAdrasi and PRAKSIS, experienced in this field, are entrusted with providing these services. Guardianship services cover minors in reception facilities, accommodation centres, and semi-independent living apartments, with additional support as needed. Guardianship responsibilities include custody, representation in personal matters, and assistance with property affairs.

Best Interest Assessment

The General Secretariat, in collaboration with UNHCR and the European Union Asylum Agency, has launched a pioneering project called "Harmonization, Establishment and Certification of Best Interest Procedures." This initiative introduces a new Toolkit aimed at standardizing assessment procedures and ensuring the best interests of the child are consistently prioritized. The Toolkit is designed to support guardianship mandated persons in their duties, thus enhancing the protection of unaccompanied children from risks such as human trafficking and exploitation. Focused on child welfare, the project seeks to provide high-quality, specialized services to all unaccompanied, separated, or temporarily removed children in Greece, regardless of nationality or statelessness. Aligned with the National Strategy for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors, the program aims to standardize best interest procedures by utilizing uniform assessment forms and involving experienced and trained professionals in the assessment process. The Best Interest Procedures Toolkit has been distributed to 24 partner child protection agencies across Greece, responsible for identification, direct support, accommodation, and care services for unaccompanied children. During the six-month pilot implementation period (August 2023 - January 2024), the General Secretariat initiated training sessions for professionals to ensure effective utilization of the Toolkit and proper conduct of best interest assessments, with the possibility of extending the program beyond the initial period.



Tackling homelessness

The General Secretariat, particularly its Accommodation and Relocation Requests Management Unit, oversees the placement of unaccompanied minors in suitable long-term accommodation facilities. These facilities include Unaccompanied Minors' Accommodation Centres or Supervised Apartments for Semi-Independent Living for minors over 16. The unit manages housing requests, transfers minors from temporary to long-term facilities, and provides necessary support services. In 2023, the Unit handled approximately 4,600 housing requests and managed vulnerable cases, collaborating with child protection agencies and authorities. It facilitated transfers of minors to safe accommodations on the mainland and throughout the country, with trained escorts and interpreters provided by NGO METAdrasi.

The Unit conducts study visits to Controlled Access Centres on islands to observe procedures and conditions firsthand. It initiates meetings with operating entities of accommodation facilities to enhance cooperation and has conducted mapping of agencies managing incidents of delinquent behaviour. Funded by the Greece-Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2021-2027, the project covers 1,750 accommodation places in centres for unaccompanied minors. Additionally, the project for Supervised Apartments for Semi-Independent Living, initially funded under the National Programme of the AMIF 2014-2020, is now included in the AMIF 2021-2027 programme. Given that homelessness is a high-risk factor additional to unaccompanied children's minority, it is self-evident how crucial this activity is for the prevention of children's exploitation and abuse of any kind.

NERM

The National Emergency Response Mechanism (NERM), established in 2021 by the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, addresses the immediate needs of unaccompanied children facing homelessness or precarious conditions. Developed in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, NERM operates since 2021 through a Tracing Line, directing cases to emergency accommodation facilities for swift and safe accommodation, serving as a model for child protection. The emergency mechanism stands as a preventive measure against trafficking by offering protection unaccompanied children who have entered Greece irregularly and most of them remain unregistered, not being able to access any services. It is a mechanism that aims at the timely identification of children in need or at risk, including child victims of trafficking, and that ensures immediate intervention and protection. NERM's scope expands with the General Secretariat's broader mandate, aiming to include interventions for other vulnerable adults and liaison with reception authorities, hospitals, and social services. Civil society organizations, like the "Network for Children's Rights" in Attica and "Arsis" in Thessaloniki, support NERM through Info Desks and Mobile Units, offering legal and psychosocial assistance to unaccompanied children and facilitating their inclusion in the accommodation system. Mobile Units escort children to police departments for registration, health facilities for examinations, and emergency accommodation facilities for placement. Since its establishment in 2021, until 31/12/2023 NERM has accommodated 4,437 unaccompanied children, with 1,356 accommodated in 2023. Currently, four Emergency Accommodation Facilities for



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Unaccompanied Children, managed by the International Organization for Migration, offer specialized services including education and healthcare, while assessing individual needs and conducting best interest assessments to determine suitable long-term accommodation. NERM has initiated targeted efforts, notably the "Protection for All Minors" program, led by the "Network for Children's Rights" and funded by INTERSOS since October 2022 in Athens. This program focuses on individualized interventions for unaccompanied and separated minors living in precarious conditions. Specifically, in the Urban Safe Space reception area, specialized services aim to persuade minors reluctant to join formal accommodation to transition to safer environments. Key to this program are the "Assistants," social workers and psychologists, who develop personalized action plans for each child and maintain a physical presence at Regional Asylum Offices in Attica to promptly assist any minors arriving there. Initially implemented only in Attica, there are discussions about extending the program to Northern Greece.

Additionally, within NERM's framework, "METADRASIS" provides a tele-interpretation line operating Monday to Saturday from 06.00 to 22.00 in various languages, enhancing communication accessibility. Greece's commitment to NERM's enhancement and continuity was showcased at the World Refugee Forum organized by UNHCR, where NERM's operations were highlighted as a best practice in child protection on December 14, 2023. In November 2023, NERM was awarded the second place for its contribution at the European Crime Prevention Award and Best Practice Conference, a contest that rewards the best European crime-prevention projects (see also: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-backed-project-keeps-thousands-migrantchildren-safe-and-streets-2024-04-19_en).

Anti-trafficking response

With the establishment of the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, collaborations with civil society partners and international bodies, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization were initiated to combat human trafficking through financial instruments and ensure comprehensive support for victims. In efforts to promote awareness and synergy with Civil Society, an information campaign called "Do you see me?" was co-organized with the NGO A21, specialized in the protection of TIP victims, and the Ministry of Citizen Protection, addressing sexual exploitation on the Pan-European Day against Trafficking in Human Beings. Theatrical performances like "And God planted Paradise" were held to raise awareness on trafficking issues. The General Secretariat also supports the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Combating Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings, participating in its meetings. The General Secretary also was part of the Greek delegation in the International Ministerial Conference commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Palermo Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings. Additionally, it facilitated the visit of EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, Ms. Diane Schmitt, who engaged with the Parliamentary Subcommittee. Participation in international conferences such as the Conference of National Reporting Mechanisms in Brussels, the Conference on the Human Dimension in Warsaw, the Regional Expert Group on Child Exploitation in Skopje, and the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) Conference in Vienna showcased best practices like the National



Emergency Response Mechanism for unaccompanied children in preventing trafficking and identifying victims early.

Regularisation of undocumented migrant workers

Another good practice has been bringing undocumented migrants who work illegally into visibility. According to the L.5078/2023 – art. 187 – the legalization of migrants who prove that they have been in Greece for 3 years before November 2023 is foreseen. Bringing such a large number of invisible migrants with irregular stay in visibility mitigates their vulnerability to exploitation situations, as they will hold residence permits and will have access to labour and insurance rights. This provision is anticipated to benefit 28.000 migrants.

B. Impacts of conflict, crisis, COVID, climate or other emergency contexts

The impact of the restrictions imposed in an attempt to stop the COVID-19 pandemic on the "intensity" (number of cases) and manifestations of trafficking has been decisive. Recruitment, trafficking in human beings for the purpose of exploitation, is a criminal phenomenon directly subject to the law of "supply and demand". It is a fact that the demand for the services of victims of trafficking has decreased due to the dynamic situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The supply has also decreased accordingly, resulting in a reduction in the number of cases.

Conflict and war situations have a multiple and serious impact on trafficking, as they directly contribute to the creation of vulnerabilities (forced population movements, displacement, refugee and migration flows, etc.) that perpetrators exploit by recruiting and subsequently exploiting victims.

In light of the ongoing Ukrainian refugee emergency and keeping in mind that separated or unaccompanied children from Ukraine are at high risk of human trafficking, the *National Emergency Response Mechanism (NERM)* has put in place comprehensive procedures for the immediate identification, registration, and best-interest assessment of separated and unaccompanied minors arriving in Greece from Ukraine.

Following identification and registration of UAC arriving from Ukraine, NERM provides emergency accommodation to unaccompanied minors and follows-up the cases of separated minors, who are accommodated in Greece by relatives. NERM has been notified for a total of 587 separated or unaccompanied minors that have arrived in Greece from Ukraine, until 31/12/2023. More specifically, National Emergency Response Mechanism (NERM) of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum designed and coordinated the reception response for unaccompanied or separated children, arriving in Greece from Ukraine.

This response with a strong preventive focus on human trafficking, has been based on three key elements such as the: i) establishment of a coherent and effective referral pathway, ii) registration of every unaccompanied or separated child arriving at Greek entry points by the Police and other competent authorities, iii) collaboration with Child Prosecutor Offices to streamline issues of parental care, custody and guardianship. In 2023, NERM established a



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stronger collaboration with the social services of the Greek municipalities, which are involved in following up the cases of children from Ukraine in their municipalities. Every case of separated children, is referred, following registration and initial screening by the police and NERM, to the social services of the municipalities, which are competent for ensuring the well – being of the children and ensure that their needs are met.

The GSEHR has created a leaflet entitled: *“We are here for you”* in collaboration with the UNHCR. It contains useful information in Ukrainian, Russian and English language and a Qr Code for easier use on the websites of the GSEHR (www.isotita.gr, www.womensos.gr, in English and Greek) and the telephone helpline 15900, which offers 24/7 support all year long. It is distributed for free. It also contains information on the network of supporting services on violence against women.

The Office of the National Rapporteur on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (ONR) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, co-organized a workshop on strengthening the prevention of trafficking in human beings. The workshop, which was held in Athens, 11 July 2023, with the participation of all relevant Ministries/Bodies, focused on the implementation of the Recommendations of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (SR/CTHB), on the need to enhance anti-trafficking prevention amid mass migration flows. The workshop aimed to inform policy makers and practitioners in the field to prevent the current humanitarian crisis from turning into a Human Trafficking crisis.

C. Impacts of technology and digitalization

The use of the Internet has played a key role in sexual exploitation cases. Perpetrators used the internet and social media, on the one hand to recruit victims, and on the other hand to catch customers by advertising the "erotic services" of the victims. Social media platforms, online classifieds and chat apps are often used by traffickers to recruit victims with false offers/promises. The Internet enables traffickers to operate anonymously and reach a wide audience across geographical borders, which makes it more difficult to identify and dismantle criminal organizations active in the field of recruitment, trafficking and exploitation.

The Hellenic Police is operating a special unit, the Cyber Crime Division. This unit, upon request, can aid the other competent services for the investigation of cases of Trafficking in Persons, carrying out specialized digital investigations. In addition, for the cases of TIP or sexual exploitation of minors, when committed by cyber means, a special operations centre is running in the Cyber Crime Division, on a 24-hour basis, where citizens can submit a complaint, via the five-digit telephone number 11188, free of charge to the caller.

According to the information recorded by the Hellenic NRM, among the most common platforms/digital tools reported to have been used for recruitment and/or exploitation are Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram and websites for sexual services.



Due to the increase in reported cases with an online aspect, the EKKA/NRM team is in the process of updating the NRM reporting form in order to include information relevant to the use of new technologies and/or online platforms.

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

1. In terms of legislation, the provisions of Law 4478/2017 (as amended by Law 4640/2019), which incorporated Directive 2012/29/EU, establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, among which, trafficking in human beings, still apply.

According to article 61:

1. The victim, in accordance with his/her needs, is entitled to have access to free and confidential services of general or special support and care, before, during and, for an appropriate time, after the end of the criminal proceedings. This right can also be extended to the victim's relatives, depending on their needs and the severity of the damage they suffered due to the criminal act committed against the victim.

2. The Police or other competent authority, to which the victim's complaint was filed, informs and refers the victim, upon request, to support and care services, depending on his/her needs and the degree of harm suffered as a result of the criminal offence committed against the victim.

3. Access to victim support and care services does not depend on whether or not the report of the criminal offense is filed.

4. The services of general or special support and care for victims are provided by the Police and every competent authority, as well as by public bodies such as, in particular, the social services of Local Government Organizations, the mental health structures for adults, children and teenagers, the citizens' supporters-guardians, the Community Centers, the counseling centers, support structures of the National Center for Social Solidarity, specialized services of minor victims, such as the Independent Offices for the Protection of Minor Victims of the Ministry of Justice, as well as by private law legal entities and associations of persons organized on a professional or voluntary basis, depending on the nature of the services.

5. The children of female victims of violation of personal and sexual freedom, economic exploitation of sexual life, domestic violence, human trafficking, as well as crimes with racist characteristics have the right to the support and care measures of this article.

Article 68 of the above-mentioned law provides for an individual assessment of the victim, so that any specific protection needs to be identified in order to be assessed whether and to what extent the victim may benefit from special protection measures, as provided for in Article 69, against secondary and repeated victimization, intimidation and reprisals during the investigation, as well as the conduct of criminal proceedings, including the hearing of the case. In the context of the individual assessment, particular attention should be paid (i) to the



personal characteristics of the victim, including age, race, colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or characteristics or disability and residence status; (ii) the severity of the harm suffered by the victim, the type, seriousness and nature of the crime, in particular, inter alia, terrorism, trafficking in human beings, gender-based violence, racist violence, domestic violence, sexual violence or exploitation; (iii) the circumstances under which the crime was committed.

Further, article 228 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, as amended by Law 4855/2021, provides that paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 68 of Law 4478/2017 apply as well mutatis mutandis to adult victims of trafficking in human beings, inter alia. In this case, the social investigation can be conducted by social workers of municipalities or regions.

In addition, pursuant to Law 5038/2023 (article 137), victims of human trafficking have the right to medical care and access to psychological support services provided. The competent prosecution, judicial and police authorities shall, in accordance with the relevant provisions, give priority, for the protection and safety of those victims, to the provision of translation and interpretation services where they have no knowledge of the Greek language, for their information regarding their rights and the services provided, as well as for the provision of all necessary legal assistance.

2. In terms of policies, within the “National Programme on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women”, implemented and monitored by the *General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights*, a network of 65 structures was established and operates for women victims of violence.

-the bilingual SOS telephone helpline 15900.

-44 Counseling Centers and 20 shelters all over Greece.

The services provided by the above-mentioned structures are free of charge and include psychosocial support, legal counseling as well as counseling in labor issues, emergency shelter and, where necessary, legal aid in cooperation with local Bar Associations. In designing and delivering these services, due consideration is given to the need to respond to different social, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, faiths, states of health, etc. Our goal is to empower women victims of violence and help them to regain self-esteem, thus enabling them to make sound decisions for their future, and finally gain independence in their jobs and in their personal and family lives.

All the structures provide help to women victims of trafficking regardless of whether they have been officially identified as victims of trafficking by the public prosecutor or only personally state themselves as such. The tasks of the structures also include networking with local agencies and relevant associations for joint communication and public awareness programmes.

The SOS Helpline 15900 was launched on 11th of March 2011, designed to offer advice, support and counseling to women victims of all forms of violence 24 hours/day and 365



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days/year. It is a free of charge helpline, nationwide, confidential and staffed by gender-trained counselors. Counseling is provided in both Greek and English. Victims are directly relegated to other specialized structures. It is also supported by the e-mail address: sos15900@isotita.gr. Arabic and Farsi counseling are provided upon request. Interpretation in Russian and Ukrainian is also provided by a cultural mediator since September 2022. Women are informed via a pre-recorded message about the specific hours and days during which interpretation support is available.

All the structures of the network of the GSEHR use a common database to collect data of their beneficiaries and provided services. These data are organized into the database and can be subject of analysis. The GSEHR cooperates closely with the Office of National Rapporteur and the National Referral Mechanism for the identification and referral to assistance of women victims of trafficking.

3. Regarding *unaccompanied children*, apart from the provision of legal aid to them, as part of the range of services foreseen in terms of NERM operation, as described above, the General Secretary for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection met with the Supreme Court Prosecutor competent on TIP-related issues, addressing phenomena of culture of impunity and opening a communication channel to report discrepancies in penal procedures.

In that framework the General Secretariat Anti-trafficking consultant participated in a seminar at the Judges' School, with the participation of judges and prosecutors. Moreover, GSVPIP has strengthened its collaboration with the General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights of the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family in order to establish referral protocols and optimise procedures for the provision of support of vulnerable women, who have been subjected to violence or discrimination.

4. The *Asylum Service* is one of the competent authorities in case a third-country national applies for international protection, irrespective of him/her being a presumed or identified victim of trafficking in human beings. Asylum officers and case workers can detect victims of trafficking in human beings during the performance of their duties (i.e. lodging international protection application, interview) and they receive continuously training in being able to do so.

Trafficking in human beings may also, on a case-by-case basis, be the reason for prosecution / risk of serious harm that will be investigated through the interview to check whether it leads to the granting of international protection status or not. There are specific question and decision templates and guidelines to assist caseworkers in investigating such cases, in conjunction with country-of-origin information (COI) support. However, according to the Greek law, Asylum Service is not the competent authority to identify them as victims of trafficking in human beings.

As a result, the measures taken in Asylum Service level, which were addressed in increasing detection of presumed victims of trafficking, were the following:

Establishment of referral pathway with National Referral Mechanism (NRM):



As soon as an asylum officer finds indicators of trafficking in human beings in a case, he/she makes the referral to the NRM and informs the Focal Point of the Asylum Service for trafficking in human. In case the presumed victim wishes to file a complaint, the competent police authorities and the civil society organizations that provide support (PRAKSIS (<http://www.praksis.gr/el/>) for Athens and A21 (<http://www.a21.gr/>) for Thessaloniki) are informed, while on a case-by-case basis (i.e. minors) the Prosecutor is also informed by the Head of the Regional Asylum Offices/Asylum Units (RAO/AU), even if there is no wish to file a complaint.

During 2022, there were 131 victims detected and reported to NRM, out of them the 99 were women.

During 2023, there were 146 victims detected and reported to NRM, out of them the 118 were women.

During the first months of 2024 (Jan- mid May), there were 46 victims detected and reported to NRM, out of them the 37 were women.

Training of the Asylum Service personnel on detect potential victims of trafficking:

As already mentioned, asylum caseworkers receive specialized trainings by National Referral Mechanism, EUAA and Department of Asylum Processes and Training of the Asylum Service to detect third-country nationals who are potential victims of trafficking in human beings, to provide them with the necessary information and refer them to the National Referral Mechanism. This has resulted in raising awareness among the caseworkers and in better detection of trafficking victims in general.

Additionally, the Asylum Service in cooperation with the EUAA delivers specialized coaching sessions (discussing specific cases in small groups of 4 caseworkers) delivered to caseworkers on vulnerable applicants (including potential victims of trafficking) for international protection with the aim of establishing the effective implementation of the relevant to human trafficking guidelines in the asylum procedures with a focus on identification and referral, prepare and conducting the asylum interview, decision drafting and procedural guarantees

During the reporting period, the relevant trainings and coaching sessions that took place were the following:

2022

-55 coaching sessions focused on Vulnerability cases (TIP cases included) with 183 participants.

-6 trainings on Trafficking in Human Beings (1 on the Train-The-Trainer EUAA module, 5 on the Trafficking in Human Beings EUAA module) with 97 participants.

2023



-4 trainings on Trafficking in Human Beings (3 on the Trafficking in Human Beings EUAA module and 1 on Slavery and severe human exploitation as persecution EUAA module) with 99 participants

The training and coaching sessions plan for 2024 is the following:

-5 trainings on Trafficking in Human Beings (4 on the Trafficking in Human Beings EUAA module and 1 on Slavery and severe human exploitation as persecution EUAA module) with 51 participants

-11 coaching sessions focused on Vulnerability cases (TIP cases included) with 44 participants.

Updating Specialized Tools that support caseworkers and administrative officers in Regional Asylum Offices/Asylum Units:

i. Asylum Service SOPs (for internal use only - last updated January 2023- under review): SOPs include a separate chapter “Trafficking in human beings” where guidelines are provided to asylum officers on the information which should be provided during the asylum interview to the applicants – potential victims of trafficking and the procedure to be followed.

ii. Guidelines “Human Trafficking and International Protection” (for internal use only - issued June 2017, last updated September 2022): The Guidelines include inter alia an analysis on the definition and the substantial elements of trafficking, a description of indicators that the applicant for international protection may be a victim of trafficking, and guidelines on handling relevant cases regarding refugee status determination (preparation before the asylum interview, basic standards and procedural guarantees during the asylum interview, exploration of the indicators and of specific topics during the asylum interview, credibility issues etc.).

E. Information on multi-sectoral services for victim-survivors of trafficking

The operation of the Hellenic National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is **protection-oriented**, with the main objective being to ensure timely and proper *community-based* provision of services for human trafficking victims. To this direction, an ongoing **nation-wide mapping of services** is conducted by the EKKA/NRM team, in order to keep field professionals informed and up-to-date.

EKKA is also mandated to **monitor the provision of protection services** to victims whose cases have been reported to the NRM, as foreseen in the NRM SOPs. In that context, **first – level protection services**, available and accessible upon the identification of a human trafficking victim, following a relevant risk and needs assessment, have included health care, material assistance, legal counselling and representation, accommodation, psychological and social support. If the presumed victim is a child, specialised protection services for children and assistance for appointing a guardian have been made available. *Other* services have included integration activities and assistance in voluntary repatriation/resettlement.

Interpretation should be available for victims of foreign origin at all times.



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- **Health care** refers to immediate medical response, in cases of urgent health matters, a general health assessment, provision of PEP kits, if relevant (in cases of rape incidents), and the necessary health examinations, for sheltering the victim, among others. Health care is provided by the National Health System Units and by (I)NGOs.
- **Material assistance** includes the provision of food and non-food items, such as clothing, hygiene kits etc.
- **Legal counselling and representation** refer to information provision regarding the victim's rights, determination of the victim's legal status (if of foreign origin), access to the asylum procedure or the procedure of human trafficking victims' residence permit issuance, support throughout the criminal procedures, support with the procedure of receiving victim status by the Public Prosecutor and the procedure of claiming compensation. Legal counselling for *women* victims is provided by Counselling Centres run by the General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights, and NGOs. Legal representation is offered by a limited number of NGOs. Even though *free* state legal aid for human trafficking victims is foreseen in law, it has not been reported very often.
- **Accommodation** includes shelters for women victims of violence (incl. human trafficking victims) of the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality network across the country, shelters of NGOs for women victims of sexual exploitation and one shelter exclusively for women victims of human trafficking run by an INGO.
- **Social support** entails supporting the victim in accessing services, including accompanying, signposting and supporting the victim throughout any necessary bureaucratic procedure, according to an individualised plan.
- **Psychological support** includes a psychological assessment along with a risk and needs assessment, followed by the development of a healing or counselling intervention, which aims to the prevention of re-victimisation. If necessary, the victim may be referred to a psychiatrist.
- **Integration services** include the assistance in accessing the job market, language lessons, vocational training, school enrolment and drug rehabilitation programmes, if relevant. Human trafficking victims have been included in the Special Programme for Vulnerable Populations of the National Employment Service (DYPA).
- **Assistance in voluntary repatriation/resettlement to a third country** refers to all necessary arrangements for the victim's safe return to their country of origin/habitual residence, including their interconnection with protection services there. In case of a child victim, a Best Interest Assessment process is necessary beforehand.

For more information, please refer to the updated list of service providers available [here](#).

In the migration context, according to *Asylum Service SOPs*, the asylum officers should inform presumed victims of human trafficking that they can contact the National Referral Mechanism and/or the competent department of the Hellenic Police and / or NGO's A21 Line 1109 which operates 24/7, and which is able to manage calls in almost all languages



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(<https://1109.gr/>) in order to submit the relevant complaint and receive protection and specialized services.

Additionally, from time to time, leaflets and posters from anti-trafficking campaigns are being placed in an obvious position in Asylum Service offices and waiting lounges to give the necessary info to the persons concerned.

Moreover, *NERM's Info Desks*, operating in Athens by the *Network for Children's Rights* and in Thessaloniki by *Arsis* non-governmental organizations, provide services and information to unaccompanied children, who are homeless or living in precarious conditions with the purpose of securing access to GSVPIP's protection network. In this regard, Info Desks, provide information to unaccompanied children, who are traced to be victim-survivors of trafficking.

In conclusion, Greece has taken important steps to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, especially women and girls. However, organised crime networks, taking advantage of advances in information technology, are developing new forms of recruitment, transportation and exploitation of vulnerable people, posing new challenges and concerns to States struggling against this heinous crime that violates all human rights.

At the same time, poverty, social inequalities, war, other forms of conflict, health challenges and the climate crisis are increasing the number of people vulnerable to exploitation worldwide. The development of strong national and international partnerships is essential to eradicate this extreme form of violence against human dignity and freedom of choice.

The ONR is in the process of setting up a working group, with the collaboration of all the relevant state and non-state actors, to update the National Action Plan 2019-2023, considering the EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025), the amendment of the Anti-Trafficking Directive and the recommendations of all relevant international organizations (GRETA/Council of Europe, OSCE, UNODC, UNHCR, IOM, etc.).

Greece is constantly improving its efforts to establish a comprehensive strategy for successfully combating TIP in all of its forms at the institutional, legislative, and practical levels and we remain committed to carrying on the conversation and productive cooperation with all international partners in order to achieve higher standards for preventing and combating trafficking in women and girls.