

## **II./ Trafficking in women and girls (A/RES/73/146)**

**A. Measures to address trafficking in women and girls, as per resolution 73/146, including on the increased efforts to ensure prosecution of traffickers and improve protection of victims.**

### **1. Federal Chancellery/Women**

To provide comprehensive counselling and support to victims of human trafficking and all forms of exploitation, the intervention agency "LEFÖ-IBF" has been entrusted by the Austrian government with the task of supporting female victims of human trafficking since 1998. Until 2014 with a grant, in 2014 services provided for female victims of trafficking underwent a public tender, which was won by LEFÖ-IBF. The financial resources are provided by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry for Women's Affairs. The services offered by LEFÖ-IBF include comprehensive support and counselling as well as shelters (4 apartments with a total of 28 care places). Funding is increased in accordance to inflation and the number of victims supported, which led to a substantial increase in 2018.

### **2. Federal Ministry of Justice**

To ensure efficient prosecutions of traffickers and to improve protection of victims, some public prosecutor's offices have departments specifically dedicated to investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking.

The public prosecutor's offices and the courts are sensitised to the issue of human trafficking and follow a victim-sensitive approach, in particular in organising the interrogations (the victims were interrogated separately from the defendants in a different room using video transmission to the court room) and bringing in the compensation claims.

As part of criminal investigations, special attention is paid to freezing and confiscation orders. For example, the public prosecutor's offices have special responsibilities for participating in the processing of freezing and confiscation orders.

Since 2013, the Ministry of Justice organises an annual exchange of experience and opinions with representatives of law enforcement agencies and victim protection and support organisations on trafficking in human beings, in particular by discussing experiences and problem areas on the basis of already completed cases. The recent exchanges enabled a constructive expert dialogue. During the last annual exchange, it has been agreed that the cooperation between the law enforcement authorities and the victim protection agencies has become increasingly effective, resulting in greater success in prosecuting criminals; additionally, the importance of freezing and confiscation orders has been emphasized once again.

### **3. Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection**

The BMSGPK financially supports the Austrian „Regional Implementation Initiative to combat and prevent all forms of Trafficking in human beings (THB)". This initiative aims to improve transnational coordination and cooperation in preventing and combating THB. Apart from

Austria, the following countries are participating: Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

In the framework of the initiative, annual international expert Round Table conferences in the field of THB are organized. These meetings always set a special focus on the impact of measures for female victims of THB.

## **B. Impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in regards to trafficking in women and girls, and measures undertaken to address those in the short, medium and long-term, particularly in the following areas:**

- o Impact on risks for trafficking in women and girls.
- o Adaptation of service delivery to victims and survivors.

### **1. Federal Chancellery/Women**

The Intervention agency for persons affected by trafficking in women (LEFÖ-IBF) remains open during COVID-19 restrictions. Wherever possible, counselling has been provided by phone, though face to face counselling is again being increased. Support in the shelters are adapted to COVID-19 measures. In case a woman shows COVID-19 symptoms, one shelter would be used as a "quarantine apartment". So far there was no case of COVID-19.

Furthermore, the "Regional Implementation Initiative against Human Trafficking"<sup>1</sup> launched in 2010 to intensify regional cooperation with Austria's neighbouring countries and to develop partnerships and joint strategies in the fight against human trafficking, with a focus on trafficking in women, has been continued also in 2018 and 2019. The Initiative was founded by the former Austrian Minister for Women's Affairs, Dr. Helga Konrad, and has been funded by various Ministries since. The following measures have been taken: development of "Guidelines" for the prevention, recognition and combating of human trafficking in labour exploitation, establishment of a project homepage and expert database and numerous International experts round tables on specific topics.

### **2. Austrian Development Agency**

On **25 June 2019**, Austria organised a **side event** on „**Trafficking in Women and Girls in the Context of Global Migration**“, in co-operation with the Permanent Missions of Germany and Lithuania in Geneva, UN Women and OHCHR in the margins of the 41st session of the Human Rights Council.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.idm.at/en/>