

Request for information from the Secretary-General relating to the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, trafficking in women and girls, and intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation

Response of Ireland

June 2020

Trafficking in women and girls

The Irish Government is committed to tackling the issue of human trafficking, supporting victims and pursuing traffickers. The *Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland*¹ outlines the structures and policies to be put in place to address human trafficking and support its victims while identifying the priorities needed to further address this issue and set out clear targets for delivery.

Progress has been made under the strategy to improve the access of victims to State supports. For example, the National Referral Mechanism looks after the immediate needs of suspected victims of human trafficking and ensures they can avail of supports to aid their recovery. A health-service led strategy for the identification of victims of trafficking has been proposed at Ministerial level with further discussions to take place. Ireland will continue to ensure that victims of trafficking have early access to legal practitioners, including by means of funding NGO groups that provide legal assistance.

The Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008 introduced the crime of trafficking into Irish criminal law for the first time. This law was amended and expanded by the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013, to significantly broaden the scope of what is meant by exploitation and to define forced labour in line with international norms. Laws on sexual exploitation have been further strengthened with the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017.

On 4 February 2019, the Irish Government ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Forced Labour Protocol, which reinforces the international legal framework for

http://justice.ie/en/JELR/2nd_National_Action_Plan_to_Prevent_and_Combat_Human_Trafficking_in_Ireland.pdf/Files/2nd_National_Action_Plan_to_Prevent_and_Combat_Human_Trafficking_in_Ireland.pdf

combating all forms of forced labour, including trafficking in persons. This puts Ireland among the group known as “50 for Freedom”, which stems from an ILO initiative to encourage 50-member countries to ratify the Protocol by the end of 2019.

Ireland’s engagement with the international community, including the EU, UN, Council of Europe and other international partners, on the issue on tackling human trafficking, is outlined in ‘*The Global Island- Ireland’s Foreign Policy for a Changing World*’ (2015). Ireland is working within the EU and with international partners to facilitate the detection, prevention, investigation and prosecution of persons involved in criminal activity including those engaged in serious and organised crime.

Ireland’s International Protection Office places a strong emphasis on watching for the signs of human trafficking in International Protection applicants and has an ongoing training programme in place to identify potential victims within the system. Cross Departmental and agency bodies are also advancing plans to put specialised accommodation in place for female victims of sexual exploitation, a particularly vulnerable group.

The Department of Justice and Equality is close to finalizing arrangements to appoint Ireland’s independent National Mechanism under article 19 of the EU Human Trafficking Directive.

Further dedicated state structures to combat human trafficking and provide support to victims include:

- The **Anti-Human Trafficking Unit** within the Department of Justice and Equality, responsible for coordinating government policy, and State and non-State actors in a partnership response
- A **Human Trafficking Investigation and Coordination Unit** within the Irish national police service which utilises expertise on human trafficking and sexual crime.
- Focused **consultative structures** with both State and non-State Bodies in partnership across issues surrounding awareness raising and training, identification, and types of exploitation in victims.
- The **Health Service Executive (HSE) Anti-Human Trafficking Team (AHTT)** which works in conjunction with other state bodies to provide care planning for both female and male victims of trafficking in all areas of exploitation. A Care Plan covers a range of issues including general health screening; referral to a General Practitioner (Doctor);

mental health service, etc. The aim of the Care Plan is to enable victims to gain independence and empower them to make decisions in a safe and supportive environment.