

KNOWLEDGE FORUM III

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS

Solutions and Recommendations to Identify Victims and Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in the Nordic-Baltic Region

Vilnius, 3 June 2015

Experts and specialists on the fight against trafficking in human beings (THB) from the Baltic States and Nordic countries were asked to discuss the identification of victims of human trafficking from their own experience of work at a knowledge forum held in Vilnius at the start of June as part of a project of the Nordic Council of Ministers aimed at combating human trafficking.

The background to the discussion was that although there is a lot of knowledge about traffickers and victims, there is still lack of efficiency to identify them. In recent years, discussions have focused on activities to combat THB at the national and regional levels and the fact that cross-border and international cooperation is needed for anti-trafficking actions. Today there is still need more of a focus on the identification of victims of THB at the local level. How can the Nordic and Baltic countries together better identify victims of THB?

The organisers of the knowledge forum - the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior and the Nordic Council of Ministers - asked the round tables to outline challenges, solutions and recommendations for joint activities and cooperation in the Northern Region of Europe.

The objective of the THB project initiated by the Nordic Council of Ministers in the late 2013 was to bring together experts from the Nordic countries, the Baltic States and north-western Russia so as to exchange experience and establish contacts needed in day-to-day work.

Comprising four events, the project came to an end with the Vilnius forum, but the Nordic Council of Ministers plans to continue working with the Baltic States as part of a new project in the fight against human trafficking.

Find out more about Nordic Council of Ministers' projects on THB, overviews of events, recommendations and presentations from experts etc. at www.norden.ee/en/antithb.

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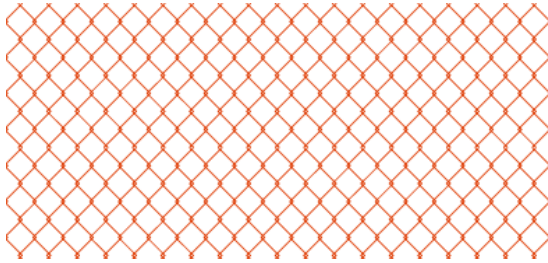


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SUMMARY OF ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

CHALLENGES

- Attitudes, lack of awareness and information about THB in society
- Lack of knowledge of new forms of THB, which leads to challenges in developing new practices
- Problem getting reliable information about victims (age and identity), especially from Africa and Asia
- Identification processes are not just numbers – the focus must be on each person under migration
- Lack of cooperation between police, prosecutors and social workers and lack of procedures on how to move forward when social workers identify victims
- Victims do not claim to be victims of THB, they do not want help and they are afraid of the police
- There are not enough authorities specialised to combat THB in our societies
- Police are good at interrogating criminals, but in THB cases they could be more sensitive in interviewing victims, otherwise they scare them away. *The question is:* Is it too big a step for victims to go from talking with NGOs to talking with the authorities and police?
- Building cooperation between NGOs and the police

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Attitudes and knowledge

- Change the attitudes of the public, authorities, police and experts and of everyone involved in combating THB and identifying its victims
- Knowledge about victims of THB is centralised in big cities – information should be distributed throughout the country to all groups in society (police, social workers, migration authorities etc.), not just experts combating THB, and everyone should have information about who to contact to find out more about THB
- Awareness-raising in society should include information collected by the police on THB as well as information on new forms of THB with the aim of changing attitudes among the public – could be done through documentaries on national TV channels

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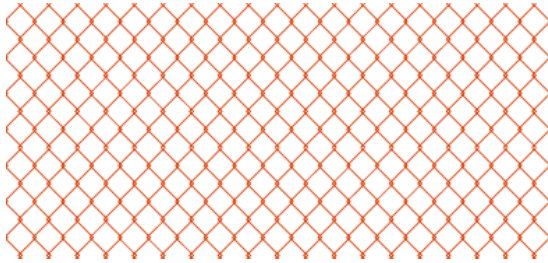


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- Better cross-border cooperation, more coordination and sharing of information about best practice between the Nordic countries and Baltic States and especially between the police and prosecutors
- Establish a specialist unit on issues of identifying victims of THB
- Organise regional exchange of experience at meetings presenting new trends, but also meetings for Nordic and Baltic authorities, officials and police
- Place victims of different forms of THB in different shelters or crisis centres – mixed shelters can create problems between different groups (victims of sexual exploitation and prostitution are especially vulnerable); you can never know who a victim of THB is or who is both a victim and trafficker; actions should be better tailored to each group of victims

Interview, training and guidelines

- Training for employees of all institutions who come into contact with victims of human trafficking in their daily work to identify victims – uniformed police, border guards, social workers, health personnel, crew members of planes, ferries, ships etc.
- Training module for authorities and police officers on victim interview methods, such as what it is like being 'in the shoes' of a victim, and how to conduct professional and sensitive interviews with victims with mental and physical problems; engage NGOs in the interview process to understand the fears and feelings of victims
- International guidelines and questionnaires for victims of THB for authorities (police, border guards, social workers, health experts etc.) developed and produced by both national authorities and international organisations on how to interview victims of THB; all should be adjusted to national needs and to the experts and specialists working with procedures and practices
- Guidelines should be developed and distributed to all uniformed police officers with templates of key questions to be put to presumed victims of THB to make sure it is a case of THB
- Map interviews with victims of THB with regard to how police officers should behave during interviews, what should be asked and done so the victim tells their story to the uniformed or investigating police – the interview, proposals for the future of the victim, different possibilities of treatment etc.; develop interview methods as a result of the mapping

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- All contact between victims of THB and the police should take place in a neutral, safe environment for the victim instead of authoritarian police premises

Facts and analysis

- Digitalisation of documents (chips and biometric information) of traffickers and victims of THB to fix entry to and exit from countries
- A single register accessible only to law-enforcement institutions in the Nordic countries, Baltic States and other EU countries with data on persons connected to THB (those convicted, those cleared, those whose guilt has not been proven, victims, those affected etc.) should be established
- Analysis of available e-information and development of software which matches keywords and enables potential victims of THB for sexual exploitation to be identified

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

- Follow the money – financial investigation of each case of THB
- Focus on knowledge of new forms of trafficking
- Spread knowledge and facts about THB within each country in cooperation with the local community
- Inter-institutional groups in municipalities should be responsible for coordinating actions to combat THB to guarantee effective activities and results of anti-trafficking actions, including training developed in cooperation with the education division of the municipality which focuses on the identification of THB
- Establish specialist units combating THB at the central police headquarters
- Training for police officers combating THB on identifying victims and understanding the psychical conditions and mental state of the victim to ensure a safe environment for the victim during interviews
- Joint expert training seminar for police, prosecutors and social workers on efficient sharing of information
- Develop cooperation between NGOs and the police
- Provide health care, psychological support and other necessary services for victims of THB

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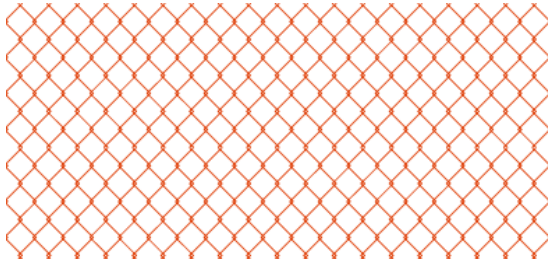


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- Traffickers from third countries operating in the EU should be deported from the EU for at least 10 years
- Intelligence data and information sharing with specialist units on victims and potential victims of THB

*The challenges, solutions and recommendations were overviewed and edited by Dr. **Reda Sirgediene**, Adviser for THB at the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior and **Carita Peltonen**, Independent International Expert on THB to the Nordic Council of Ministers.*

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