



Nordic Council of Ministers'  
Office in Estonia



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS

## CONFERENCE REPORT

### NORDIC-BALTIC EXPERT FORUM ON PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

10 - 11 May 2017 | Tallinn, Estonia

The Nordic-Baltic Expert Forum on the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking was arranged on 10 - 11 May 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia. The forum gathered together such experts as national coordinators, social workers, psychologists, lawyers, authorities including the police and prosecutors, victim assistance units, researchers and representatives of NGOs from the Nordic and Baltic countries to discuss human trafficking and the protection of its victims from different perspectives.

Over three sessions the forum focused on the following topics:

- Identification victims in the country of destination and of origin
- Who are the victims of human trafficking?
- Victim support systems, rehabilitation and reintegration

## SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

### OPENING

**Rait Kuuse**, Deputy Secretary General on Social Policy, Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia  
Rait Kuuse started by introducing the work Estonia is doing against human trafficking. The *Estonian Government's Violence Prevention Strategy 2015-2020* includes trafficking in human beings as a violent crime. Kuuse said the strategy sets out concrete activities to reduce and prevent violence in its various forms, including domestic violence, sexual violence, violence against minors and trafficking in human beings, including prostitution. The actions include raising people's awareness of their rights, regular mapping of the nature and scope of violence, the development of services for victims and training specialists. Other activities are an anti-trafficking hotline, rehabilitation services for women involved in prostitution and networking training for police, prosecutors and victim support specialists. Awareness-raising campaigns are also planned to be arranged during the implementation period.

Kuuse said that a law proposing the criminalisation of buying sex from human trafficking victims is under discussion in the Estonian Parliament, and he hoped it would come into force within a few months. Buying sex from minors has already been punishable since 2013. Tackling demand for prostitution is inevitable, Kuuse stressed, if Estonia wants to fight human trafficking.

Kuuse said that the *Estonian Victim Support Act* currently recognises two categories of victims: presumed victims identified by service providers; and officially identified victims participating in criminal investigations. Unofficially identified victims have mostly been sexually exploited women and Estonian citizens. Estonia provides specialised services for around 10 officially identified new victims each year. Kuuse assumed that the change in legislation would give more victims identified than before. In Estonia the Social Insurance Board organises services for victims, while the NGO Eluliin provides a shelter and counselling.

Kuuse ended by saying that GRETA would visit Estonia in May 2017 to evaluate the country's efforts to tackle human trafficking and to find out whether Estonia is fulfilling the demands of the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings*. Kuuse said that this would be the first evaluation for Estonia and concluded with: "We are looking forward to it with great interest. We are aware of our strengths and weaknesses, but sometimes it is good to get an outsider's view of the whole situation."

**Christer Haglund**, Director, Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Estonia

Christer Haglund started his speech by saying that the Nordic Council of Ministers has a long tradition of creating platforms for networking and cooperation with partners in the Baltic Sea region. The Expert Forum represents a good opportunity to share knowledge and learn from one another in order to be more effective in fighting human trafficking. Haglund said: It is important to monitor trends in human trafficking in order to respond in the best possible way. Haglund said that sexual exploitation continues to be the most common form of human trafficking in Europe, accounting for 67 % of all victims –most of them women and children. Special attention must be given to children. He said also that it is necessary to address all forms of exploitation, asking: "Do we know all of the forms?"

Today there are a lot of different types of human trafficking, and each type has its own modus operandi, trafficker profile, recruitment strategies and methods of control. Traffickers are very creative, always one step ahead of the authorities and politicians fighting human trafficking. Human traffickers find new ways to exploit vulnerable people in order to earn more money. This modern form of slavery appears to be extensive: if we look carefully we can see it in almost every sector on the Nordic and Baltic labour market.

Labour exploitation is an increasing phenomenon and exists throughout Europe, particularly affecting men. EU citizens are the registered victims and European citizens are the human traffickers. This is seen especially in sectors with seasonal work – amusement parks, summer camps, golf courses and community swimming pools. People work as lifeguards, camp counsellors, ride attendants and food vendors, but in the Nordic countries we have also seen this in other sectors. The cases of berry pickers from Bulgaria in Sweden and those of berry pickers from Thailand in Finland have been taken to court. We have also seen it when road construction workers are sent from one country to another. It is clearly easier to use seasonal work to exploit people.

The Nordic Council of Ministers will be organising the next forum in Latvia in 2018, which will focus on businesses and the labour market and discuss the difference between unsatisfactory working conditions and human labour trafficking. Haglund expressed his hope that the participants at the forum will discuss and exchange knowledge on human trafficking victim support in order to move forward in the fight against human trafficking. He also encouraged the participants to find ways of improving cooperation between the countries in the Baltic Sea region. Haglund ended by saying: "We have to remember that behind every victim is a story of human tragedy."

## **Human Trafficking Victims and Their Stories**

**Kristiina Luht**, Adviser, Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia

Kristiina Luht started her presentation by describing different forms of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, such as street prostitution, window prostitution and brothels, strip clubs and bars, the pornography industry, escort services, modelling agencies and massage parlours. She said that the "adult entertainment" advertisements in newspapers and tourist guides use the same terms. This "adult entertaining" industry is the reality that all women, men, girls and boys face when they are used for sexual exploitation. As early as 1949 the *UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others* stated: "Prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community."

Luht also made reference to French author Victor Hugo, who as far back as 1862 said: "They say that slavery has disappeared from European civilisation. That is incorrect. It still exists, but now it weighs only on women, and it is called prostitution."

[https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/un\\_convention\\_for\\_the\\_suppression\\_of\\_the\\_traffic\\_in\\_persons\\_1949\\_en\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/un_convention_for_the_suppression_of_the_traffic_in_persons_1949_en_1.pdf)

Human trafficking is based on false expectations. Most victims of human trafficking are sexually exploited and are lured with false promises of good jobs. The police have to believe the story of the victim in order to start an investigation. Luht pointed out that expectations are based on gender roles: society expects men to be strong, but both women and men are vulnerable, albeit for different reasons.

Luht said that the numbers are important and presented international statistics on the numbers of victims of human trafficking and of different forms of human trafficking, as well as the profits from different forms of human trafficking. In 2013 and 2014 there were 15,846 victims of human trafficking in the EU. Luht pointed out that there are a lot of statistics, and both national and international organisations present very different numbers. She said that the numbers are not all: it is important to remember that behind every number is an individual. She stated that one victim is one victim too many, and that human trafficking is always about people.

Luht described the study *Men who buy sex. Who they buy and what they know.* (Farley, Bindel, Golding, Eaves, 2009. A study on 103 men who buy sex.). Luht quoted one woman as saying: "My mother forced me to have sex with strangers [when I was 11 and 12 years old]." She also quoted one man's reasons for why men buy sex: "Look, men pay for women because he can have whatever and whoever he wants. Lots of men go to prostitutes so they can do things to them that real women would not put up with." Research shows that sex buyers have different attitudes to women than men who do not buy sex. Luht described the connection between prostitution and violence and the attitudes of sex buyers to rape and violence against women. Luht said: "It is important to change attitudes by talking to your friends, your family and people you meet. You can change their attitudes. You should not keep silent."

Luht said that the demand that leads to human trafficking should be addressed, and that sexual exploitation is more profitable than labour exploitation according to the OSCE. She said: "As long as we exploit women, our societies are not equal." There should be more and better cooperation between authorities, organisations and experts, action should be taken to give victims a better life and countries should learn from one another on how to combat human trafficking. Luht ended her presentation by saying: "I do this because I have a voice. The women and men who are victims of human trafficking cannot speak."

## **SESSION I**

### **IDENTIFICATION VICTIMS IN THE COUNTRY OF DESTINATION AND OF ORIGIN**

Experts from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and the St Petersburg region presented cases of human trafficking from the perspective of the country of origin and the country of destination and described how the victims were detected and how the cases were investigated and processed in the respective countries. The presentations also focused on cooperation between the countries during the process,

from identification to rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation, and investigation and legal procedures.

## **ESTONIA-FINLAND – A CASE OF FORCED LABOUR**

These presentations focussed on cases of forced labour in Finland and cooperation between Estonia and Finland to help victims of human trafficking.

**Sirle Blumberg**, Director, NGO Living for Tomorrow, Tallinn, Estonia

Sirle Blumberg talked about a case from 2012, where an employer in Finland exploited Estonian men. The case started with a phone call to the *Victim Help Hotline* in Estonia where a man said: "I want to tell you everything." The story involved three Estonian men, who said that they felt stupid, guilty and embarrassed. The caller said: "We should have known better." The men had found an offer to work in Finland through an advertisement. They signed contracts to work in Finland for three months, which included agreements on their salaries, accommodation, petrol expenses, reimbursement for working tools and daily allowances. The reality turned out to be totally different from what was agreed upon in the contracts. The promised accommodation was an empty room in an unfinished house without any appliances and no heating. The work was cutting down tree branches around power lines, which is dangerous work, but the employer offered no safety equipment or safety training. The men worked for 25 days straight without any days off and did not receive any salary, although it had been agreed that they would be paid twice a month. The NGO *Living for Tomorrow* contacted in July 2012 the *Regional State Administrative Agency for Southwestern Finland*, which in September 2012 submitted a statement on the violations against the Estonian men. Blumberg ended by presenting the indicators that the *International Labour Organization* (ILO) has developed on trafficking of adults for labour exploitation.

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**Kristiina Linna**, Inspector, Regional State Administrative Agency for Southwestern Finland, Turku, Finland

Kristiina Linna described the challenges the *Regional State Administrative Agency in Finland* has faced since 2004, when the numbers of workers from foreign countries started rising very rapidly. Common trends among foreign workers in Finland are that they:

- Have low salaries;
- Work long hours;
- Have bad housing conditions;
- Are undernourished;
- Meet with violence and threats; and
- Are restricted in their movements.

For example, workers from Thailand had just rice to eat from morning to evening. Today workers from Romania and Bulgaria earn the lowest salaries in Finland.

Linna also presented the work of the inspectors in Finland, who monitor employers and carry out inspections on request. During the inspections Linna talks with the workers, uses interpreters if she is unable to speak the language the worker speaks, and informs the workers of their legal rights in Finland. The inspectors cooperate with other authorities (such as health inspectors and fire brigades) regarding poor housing and with trade unions about working conditions and salaries. Linna also trains people to identify victims who are exploited at their place of work and assists the police in pre-investigations of forced labour

cases in e.g. calculating unpaid salaries. The inspectors report possible crimes to the police as different forms of violation at the place of work, such as discrimination and blackmail. Linna ended her presentation by saying: "We try to help the victims in every possible way." [https://www.norden.ee/images/heaolu/inimkaubanduse\\_konverents/Ohvrite\\_kaitse\\_eksperdifoorum\\_2017/Kristiina\\_LinnaTallinn100517\\_%C3%9Childuvusre%C5%BEiim.pdf](https://www.norden.ee/images/heaolu/inimkaubanduse_konverents/Ohvrite_kaitse_eksperdifoorum_2017/Kristiina_LinnaTallinn100517_%C3%9Childuvusre%C5%BEiim.pdf)

## **NORWAY-LITHUANIA – A CASE OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

These presentations focussed on a case of sexual exploitation where Lithuanian men forced two young Lithuanian women into prostitution in Oslo. The case was taken to court in both Oslo and Vilnius.

**Thor Martin Elton**, Police Chief Inspector, Organized Crime Section, Oslo Police District, Norway

Thor Martin Elton presented *Operation Ulven*, a case where two young women from Lithuania were sexually exploited and used for prostitution in Oslo in Norway in 2009. The women were recruited in Lithuania to work in Oslo, arriving there via Stockholm. Immediately after their arrival two Lithuanian men raped them. The women asked for money to travel back to Lithuania, but were forced to continue working as prostitutes.

The police in Oslo investigated the case. Three Lithuanian men were arrested, but only two were able to be taken to court, because the third man had returned to Lithuania. The case was brought before the court in Oslo in August 2011 and the men were convicted of pimping and human trafficking. The sentence for one of the men was 4 years and 9 months for human trafficking, while for the other man it was 1 year and 10 days for pimping.

The Lithuanian authorities did not wish to hand the third Lithuanian man over to the Norwegian authorities, so it was decided that the case should be handed over from Norway to Lithuania. This was done in cooperation with Eurojust in early 2012. Norway had all of the documents of the case translated into Lithuanian.

The third Lithuanian man was prosecuted in Lithuania for human trafficking, but the court process took a very long time. The man was eventually convicted in 2015. The sentence was 3 years and 8 months for pimping (to which the Lithuanian court had amended the charge from human trafficking). Elton ended his presentation by saying: "The handling of the case in Lithuania took too long. It is far too long a time for two young women, who were victims of human trafficking, to wait for a case to be brought before the court."

**Kristina Mišinienė**, Director, NGO Caritas Lithuania

Kristina Mišinienė talked about how the NGO *Caritas Lithuania* has assisted the two young Lithuanian women during the court process in Lithuania. Mišinienė showed how the Lithuanian women had been forced to sell sexual services in the centre of Oslo and to stand on the street close to the Lithuanian Embassy and have sex in cars. The young women did not talk about being raped or the other violations they had experienced in Oslo. She said that the Lithuanian men had exploited the young women and Norwegian men had bought sexual services from the women.

Mišinienė spoke about the psychological process the young women went through over the years, and when they faced the criminals in court and had to answer all of the questions about the sexual exploitation asked by the prosecutor and the judge in the court over and over again. During the legal process in the Lithuanian court, the charge was amended from

human trafficking to pimping. The Lithuanian human trafficker was assisted in the case by one of the best defence attorneys in Lithuania, who managed to get the court to downgrade the charge from human trafficking to pimping. The result was that the Lithuanian man was sentenced to 3 years and 8 months for pimping. The victims should have the right to a short legal process so that they can get on with their lives. In this case the young women spent three years in Lithuania reading about themselves in the newspapers while the case was being heard in court. Cooperation between all partners should be better so as to take care of victims and help them make a new start. Mišiniene stressed that victims of human trafficking in Lithuania should have the right to better attorneys to defend their interests in the courts. Mišiniene said that the case was an example of bad cooperation between two countries in a joint case of human trafficking: cooperation between the country of origin and the country of destination should be more efficient.

### **DENMARK-LATVIA – A CASE OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

This case represented cooperation between the *Centre against Human Trafficking* (CMM) in Copenhagen, Denmark and the NGO *MARTA Centre* in Riga, Latvia. It centred on a young Latvian woman who was trafficked to Germany, where she was forced into prostitution. The woman escaped and travelled to Denmark. Cooperation between the CMM and the MARTA Centre resulted in the young woman's returning to Latvia.

#### **Berit Arne, Social Worker, Centre against Human Trafficking, Denmark**

Berit Arne talked about a young woman from Latvia who was drugged and kidnapped by a Latvian man and trafficked to Germany in autumn 2015. The man forced her into prostitution to sell sexual services in order to pay back her debts. In Germany the woman was arrested for shoplifting, but she escaped and travelled to Denmark in January 2016. Initially the CMM was in contact with her and sought to help her and she was also in contact with her family, but in February 2016 both the centre and her family lost contact with her. In May that year the young woman again made contact with the CMM: she was now pregnant, was using drugs and had been diagnosed as HIV-positive. She had a boyfriend who sold drugs for a motorcycle gang. Arne explained that the hospital in Denmark recommended treatment for her to stop the drug use because of her pregnancy, and she was advised to have no contact with her boyfriend.

The CMM told the woman what kind of support she could get in Denmark and that the best choice for her was to return to Latvia, where she could get support from her family. She agreed to return to Latvia and to have her child. The CMM contacted the Marta Centre and they agreed on the practical details of the woman's repatriation to Latvia. The Danish Police escorted her to the airport in Copenhagen.

#### **Zane Zvirgzdiņa, Legal Advisor, MARTA Centre, Latvia**

Zane Zvirgzdiņa outlined the action taken by the MARTA Centre to help the young woman return to Latvia. The woman's mother had contacted the MARTA Centre, told them the story of her daughter and asked for their help in getting her daughter back to Latvia. The *Organized Crime Unit of the Riga Police* was also involved, but because the young woman had not asked for police help or informed them that she had been a victim of human trafficking, the case was not investigated in Germany.

In Denmark, contact with the young woman was lost until 28 June. The MARTA Centre got in touch with the *Homeless Centre* in Copenhagen, where the woman was staying, to

convince her to remain there until she returned to Latvia. The CMM contacted Latvian national coordinator Lasma Stabina, after which the young woman was returned to Latvia within nine days.

The case is an example of good cooperation between two countries combatting human trafficking in the repatriation of victims to their home country. The prompt response was possible because of the mutual understanding of human trafficking in the organisations involved in both countries. Zvirgzdiņa stressed that it is crucial in such cases to act quickly, to ensure that the victim is given the assistance and support they need in both the country of destination and the country of origin throughout the process, and that the assisting organisations (in this case the MARTA Centre in Riga and CMM in Copenhagen) remain in close contact at all times.

The Danish and Latvian police were involved in helping the victim safely return to Riga. In Copenhagen the Danish police accompanied her to the airport, while in Riga the Latvian police and representatives of the MARTA Centre met her at the airport. Zvirgzdiņa said that in Latvia a victim of human trafficking can obtain social rehabilitation services if they are involved in a criminal case or are approved as a recipient of social services. She also pointed out that the MARTA Centre can only help victims in Latvia, providing them with different forms of social and psychological support. People do not need to prove that they are victims of human trafficking in order to be assisted.

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## **ICELAND-FINLAND – A CASE OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

This case was about a Kurdish woman who had come to Finland via Istanbul. In Finland she was stopped by the police and placed in a refugee camp. From Finland she travelled to Iceland, where she was to be escorted to England, but in Iceland the police also stopped her and she decided to return to Finland. Both the Icelandic and Finnish police have terminated their investigations into Nidar, and today neither authority knows where she is.

**Alda Hrönn Jóhannsdóttir**, Prosecutor, Reykjavik Metropolitan Police, Iceland

Alda Hrönn Jóhannsdóttir presented the story of Nidar, a young woman born in Iraq who was advised by her mother to flee the country. She escaped from her hometown in 2014. While still in Iraq she was offered assistance to move to England. She accepted it, paying for the assistance and travelling to Turkey on her own passport. From Istanbul she continued on to Finland, where the police on arrival stopped her. As she now had no ID card, and only an electronic visa of Turkey and a migration card for Belarus, she was sent to a refugee camp. She soon left the camp with the aim of travelling to England via Iceland.

Nidar arrived at Keflavik airport on 24 July 2015 and took a bus to Reykjavik. The next day, the woman who was to escort Nidar to England arrived from Gatwick airport. On 27 July Nidar and her escort arrived at Keflavik to board their flight to England. However, the Icelandic police stopped Nidar at passport control, so she decided to leave Iceland and return to Finland. The Finnish authorities assisted her in doing so.

Jóhannsdóttir discussed the main challenges the Icelandic police face in identifying and investigating cases of human trafficking. Each year 3 million tourists visit Iceland (a country with a population of just 330,000), so traffic through Keflavik airport is huge. Such a large number of tourists put pressure on the authorities working at the airport, and the result is



that the police lack both the manpower and the time to check all tourists. In Iceland, human trafficking cases are the responsibility of the police. The fact is that at present the Icelandic police do not have enough knowledge of human trafficking, and there is an overall lack of knowledge in Icelandic society as well.

Jóhannsdóttir said that the case of Nidar in Iceland was a dead-end investigation and that the woman had not been prosecuted in the country. She ended her presentation by asking:

- When is the right time to close an investigation?
- Why did the Icelandic police not ask the English police about the escort?
- Where is Nidar today?
- Did we do enough?

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### **SWEDEN-NW RUSSIA – A CASE WHERE THE VICTIM DISAPPEARED**

In human trafficking cases some victims disappear, and neither the authorities nor NGOs know where they go. The cases presented at the Expert Forum highlighted the challenges in the processes of repatriating victims to their countries of origin.

**Charlotta Thorelius**, Development Manager, County Administrative Board of Stockholm, Sweden

Charlotta Thorelius began by talking about the structure of *National Coordination against Human Trafficking in Sweden*. It is led by the National Coordinator and was appointed by the government in 2009. It received a broadened mandate in 2013 in order to work against all forms of trafficking, not just sexual exploitation, and gets its assignments directly from the government for a period of one to two years. The National Coordination of Human Trafficking in Sweden is based at the County Administrative Board of Stockholm. The office has a staff of six.

Thorelius presented a case of human trafficking concerning a Russian woman whom the Swedish police had identified as a victim of human trafficking. The *Regional Coordinator of Human Trafficking in Skåne* cooperated closely with the police and other authorities on solving the case and assisting the victim, who was granted a temporary resident permit, placed in a shelter was referred to the *International Organization of Migration (IOM) Voluntary Safe Return Program*. The victim herself wished to return as quickly as possible to Russia to protect her family, whom the human traffickers had threatened. The process of repatriation was too slow for her, so she travelled to Russia, only shortly afterwards to return to Sweden and then disappear. In Sweden the National Coordinator, the secure shelter and the police tried to find and get in contact with the Russian woman, as did the IOM in Russia, but without success.

Thorelius said that the risk assessment processes of the authorities are too slow and that there is a need for cross-border cooperation to support victims. She ended by saying that there is a need for close cooperation between all stakeholders and that trust and information are the key to preventing disappearances. To this day none of the authorities in Sweden know where the Russian woman is.

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**Diana Mubarakshina**, Lawyer, St Petersburg Center for International Cooperation of the Red Cross, Russia

Diana Mubarakshina started by presenting the legislation on human trafficking in the Russian Federation. She also presented the *Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)* cooperation agreements on combatting trafficking in human beings, human organs and tissues.

Since 2009, the *St Petersburg Red Cross* has been involved in activities to prevent human trafficking such as information campaigns, exchange of knowledge and experience and cooperation with the mass media.

The activities of the Red Cross include the following:

- Legal assistance and information for vulnerable groups – both Russian citizens and migrants. In 2016 the Red Cross provided more than 17,000 consultations to refugees and migrants and consulted asylum seekers and stateless persons. 3000 consultations were on legal issues with people from Ukraine, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Africa, et al.
- A hotline received 2993 phone calls in 2016 on migration legislation and human trafficking.
- A shelter was opened in 2013 and provides temporary housing for vulnerable migrants. In 2015 and 2016 59 victims from Ukraine, Syria, North Korea, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, et al. were temporarily placed at the shelter.
- An information reception point in St Petersburg gives migrants, refugees and asylum seekers information and help on such matters as how to get a temporary resident permit, work permit (for migrants who do not need a visa, it is called patent) or citizenship. In 2016 a total of 13,998 persons made use of the reception point.

Mubarakshina presented two cases of human trafficking in St Petersburg. The first was from 2014 when more than 80 Vietnamese workers were found in the basement of an unfinished building in the city. They had travelled to Russia to earn money. When they were found they did not know that they were in St Petersburg and had no identification papers. They had been forced to work 13-14 hours per day, their living conditions were poor and they did not have enough food to eat. The Red Cross managed to assist and accommodate 13 of the victims and assisted them to return to Vietnam. Mubarakshina said that the remaining 70 victims continue to be exploited somewhere in the Russian Federation. They are registered as immigrants, but there is currently no system in the country for identifying these people.

The second case was that of a Russian girl who was recruited in Dagestan in 2007 to work in Dubai. Upon her arrival she was sexually exploited, sold for 10,000 USD and forced to work. She was then sold on and sexually exploited for another four years. In early 2014 she was repatriated to Russia by the IOM. She refused to return to Dagestan: this was not possible because she had been sexually exploited. She wished to go to a convent, so the IOM assisted her with a small grant and helped her move to a convent in Russia, where she still lives today.

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## **FINLAND-LITHUANIA – HUMAN TRAFFICKING WITHIN A COUNTRY**

Human trafficking does not only cross borders, but can happen within a country itself. Victims who are trafficked from one country to another have need of different assistance to victims who are trafficked within a country. All victims are vulnerable and need help, but those trafficked within a country know the language and culture of that country, whereas victims trafficked from the country of origin to the country of destination cannot speak the language and have no knowledge of their rights in that country. At present, in the Nordic and Baltic countries only few cases of human trafficking within a country have been taken to court.

**Pia Marttila**, Coordinator of Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking, Victim Support Finland

Pia Marttila spoke about challenges in regard to the needs of victims of internal and cross-border human trafficking. Most of the victims identified in Finland have been victims of forced labour. Marttila said that the ideal victim is considered to be a young woman who cries, is humble and seems weak, who gratefully accepts any assistance, who is "easy to help" and who wishes to return to her home country as soon as possible. However, she said that this is not the experience that *Victim Support Finland* has had of the victims they encounter. The image that ordinary people seem to have of victims of human trafficking today is that the trafficking always involves physical violence against the victims. Such false concepts can prevent identification. Marttila pointed out that human trafficking is about exploitation and control.

Common challenges in assisting human trafficking victims in Finland are the lack of suitable lawyers and the almost non-existent services. There is a lack of 24-hour assistance, competent trauma therapists and suitable options for housing. Most assistance is directly or indirectly tied to criminal processes. In Finland, victims lose their right to government assistance if the police amend the charge from human trafficking to another crime. Court proceedings can take years, and the victims have to relive their trauma over and over again. Marttila said that in cases where buyers are prosecuted for sexual services, the case is a crime against the state and the victim has to go through the trauma of police investigations and court processes. Although the compensation assigned can be substantial, it is usually hard for the victim to obtain the money.

The strict immigration policies in most countries make the victims very vulnerable in cross-border human trafficking cases, with an undocumented status increasing vulnerability to exploitation. The fear of deportation or losing an existing residence permit also prevents victims from seeking help or reporting things to the police. Marttila talked about a victim who thought it was normal to work 17 hours a day in Finland, as he and his family did not know Finnish law. The victims often think that law enforcement favours the strong. They are also afraid of threats against their family in their country of origin. The victims feel lonely and isolated, and the only contacts they have in the country may be the people exploiting them. This isolation and stress can lead to mental health problems. Marttila asked: "What happens if their residence permit is not extended?" She said that the worst-case scenario for victims is being deported. The result is that the trafficker stays in the country and the victim is left unprotected from revenge.

In human trafficking cases where a person is trafficked within their home country, the positive aspect is that the victim understands the society and speaks the language. Therapy and health care can be received in their mother tongue. Grooming and psychological manipulation develop little by little. Often a victim does not know when exploitation starts.

Social media often reveals the connection between the perpetrator and the victim. Internal human trafficking gains more media attention, which is also a burden for the victims. The environment constantly reminds the victim of the case, and the greatest cost is to the victim, as they are branded criminals or, in cases of sexual exploitation, prostitutes. The perpetrators of human trafficking within a country are not seen as perpetrators or criminals because they do not correspond to the image of a "mafioso" or criminal. The victim is often seen as an alcoholic or a drug user, although their use may have started after their exploitation. Public opinion is often that "it is the victim's own fault". Many victims have also contacted the authorities for help, but when they do not receive assistance they believe they cannot be helped.

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**Emilijus Stanevicius**, Head of Panevezys County Criminal Police for Organized Crime, Lithuania

Emilijus Stanevicius talked about a case of human trafficking within Lithuania. A minor girl (15 years old) was sexually exploited for prostitution. At a party, the girl had met a young man (19 years old) and another girl (17 years old) who recruited her into prostitution by telling her that she could earn money by selling sex. They also told her that it was not illegal. The girl's picture was posted on an online dating site with the message that she wanted to meet men for 15-30 euros per hour. The exploiter was in contact with the potential customers and transported the girl to and from the clients. The police found out during the investigation that the perpetrators had controlled the girl through continuous telephone calls and had also accommodated her in their home. They only gave her food and clothes and kept the money the girl received from the clients.

*Caritas Lithuania* cooperated with the police throughout the investigation. The organisation was in contact with the girl throughout the investigation, providing her with psychological and social assistance and supporting her during the pre-trial investigation and court case. The court convicted both perpetrators, sentencing the young woman to 3 years and 6 months (suspended for 3 years) and the young man to 3 years.

Stanevicius pointed out that cooperation between police, prosecutors and NGOs is strongly recommended in investigations of human trafficking. He said: "We can clearly see, in this case, that we, the police, thanks to our cooperation with the NGO Caritas Lithuania, learned that a crime had been committed and were able to initiate and successfully complete an investigation, with the exploiters being sentenced." He said that the challenge is the lack of information exchange between social service authorities, such as children's rights services, pre-trial investigation institutions and the prosecutor's office. A problem is that social services experts who visit socially vulnerable families do not always have the knowledge they need to identify potential victims of human trafficking. Stanevicius ended his presentation by saying: "Early identification of victims of human trafficking can prevent potential crimes."

## **SESSION II**

### **WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING?**

Human traffickers transport women and men as well as children from non-EU countries to the EU and beyond, including the Nordic and Baltic countries. Many of the victims are

forced to work in the catering, agriculture and cleaning sectors, to sell sexual services and drugs and to shoplift. These victims are also transported from one country to another within the Nordic-Baltic region.

### **Nigerian Trafficking in Human Beings**

**Knut Bråttvik**, Police Superintendent, KRIPOS, Norway

Knut Bråttvik gave a presentation on the *European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) sub-project ETUTU*, starting with an overview of human trafficking in Norway. In 2015 there was 324 potential victims of human trafficking in Norway, of whom 231 were from Nigeria. Today there is less street prostitution, but in urban areas there is probably more activity in apartments, as well as increased advertising online. As a result of national legislation criminalising the buying of sex in Norway, there is increased control of the prostitution industry. Norway has also drawn up *a new national action plan on human trafficking to follow up on recommendations* from the inspection of the *Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)*.

Bråttvik pointed out that human trafficking is a part of organised crime and that there is a huge difference between the country of origin and the countries of destination. He also described the victims, the recruitment processes, how the victims are transported, the control mechanisms of the victims and that the victims are usually discovered when they are stopped at borders, checked by police or seek asylum. He also said that embassies can always contact the police if they suspect that people have fallen victim to human trafficking.

Bråttvik then went on to present the activities of the ETUTU project on Nigerian Trafficking in Human Beings. The aim of the project is to tackle the Nigerian criminal networks trafficking victims for sexual and other forms of exploitation across the EU. It also aims to support the national EU investigations of these Nigerian criminal networks. Germany, in cooperation with the Netherlands, is chairing the network, while Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Luxemburg, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom are participating countries. The network also cooperates with Europol, Eurojust, Frontex and Interpol and the delegation of the central THB office in Nigeria (NAPTIP). The project began in 2012 and continues now as a network until 2019.

Bråttvik stressed that countries need more knowledge about the Nigerian victims so as to understand their behaviour and their unwillingness to cooperate with the police in European countries. The ETUTU network needs to cooperate closely with Nigeria in order to understand who is behind these human trafficking crimes. All knowledge on and experience of the victims and the criminal Nigerian networks is then shared within ETUTU. The aim is to create analysis and develop methods to fight human trafficking from Nigeria to Europe. The project has produced a handbook on best practice, although it is restricted to law enforcement agencies. Joint action days have been arranged to enable people to learn how to identify victims. It is also important to have trustworthy interpreters in order to gain knowledge about the cultural backgrounds and fears of the victims and be able to build bridges between the victims and the police officers. Bråttvik said that the voodoo used to force the victims to continue working for the traffickers and criminals is a problem because it has a strong effect on the Nigerian victims.

Bråttvik said that the ETUTU network cooperates with the Santa Marta Group, which is an alliance of international police chiefs and bishops working with civil society in a process endorsed by Pope Francis to eradicate human trafficking and modern-day slavery. Bråttvik

ended his presentation by saying that if anyone has problems with human trafficking connected to Nigeria, the authorities and organisations should contact Germany, including those from countries that are not members of the ETUTU network.

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## **African Victims of Human Trafficking in Denmark**

**Thomas Laigaard**, Social Worker, Danish Centre against Human Trafficking (CMM), Denmark

Thomas Laigaard presented the objectives of the work of the CMM, which are to:

- Develop and improve social efforts for victims;
- Coordinate collaboration between authorities and NGOs; and
- Gather and disseminate knowledge.

In Denmark in 2016 there was an increase in the number of African victims (109 in total), most of them women (105 women to 4 men), most from Nigeria (99 in total), most used in prostitution for sexual exploitation (104 in total) and most over the age of 18. In recent years there has been a rise in the number of minors.

Laigaard also outlined trends among African victims of human trafficking in Denmark in 2013 and 2014. He said that most of the Nigerian women who arrived in Denmark in those two years had a legal residence permit for either Italy or Spain, but travelled or were moved to the Nordic countries because the prices of sexual services are higher there. Most of the victims come from the Edo region of Nigeria, have children and are in debt to the traffickers. The CMM has seen an increase in victims' willingness to return to their home country, but the victims are not interested in cooperating with the police. The traffickers take advantage of the freedom of movement within the Schengen area and use threats against the victims and their families. There has also been a change in the residency status of the victims arriving in Denmark: in 2013 just 15% were non-EU residents, but this had risen to 45% by 2016. The proportion of people disappearing from shelters has also increased in recent years, standing at 47% in 2016.

Denmark is working with Italy because at present most immigrants from Africa take the same route via Somalia to Algeria and then across the Mediterranean to Italy. From there they travel or are sent to Denmark. The immigrants arriving in Italy do not usually wish to remain there – they have another country in mind as their final destination and a telephone number to call when they arrive in Italy. They are usually escorted as they travel through Europe, often on another person's passport. Laigaard said that it was important to cooperate with Italy so as to gain knowledge of how the authorities and NGOs there deal with the identification of and provision of assistance to victims. The safe houses are smaller in Italy, and Italy and Denmark have different identification systems for victims. In Denmark the focus is on reducing irregular immigration, which is a violation of the Alien Act. In Italy, organisations are doing outreach work and have a lengthy identification process of victims involving several interviews. The organisations also report the victims to the police. In Denmark only 78% of identified victims are reported to the police.

Laigaard highlighted the challenges of working with identified victims from Africa. He said: "Who wants to give up their dreams? Most victims have invested a lot of money in travelling to Europe and have spent several months on the road to get to Denmark, so it's shameful

for them to return home without any money." The victims are also afraid of threats and revenge on the part of the traffickers. For these people, returning to their home country is not attractive. Assisting victims is a challenging task for social workers. Laigaard said what is most important is listening to the victims in order to find the best solution for them and he said that the victims have different problems and thus the assistance should be tailored to the needs of individual victims. Laigaard ended by saying that Italy is a key player in the immigration flow into Europe and that it is invaluable to have an understanding of Italian immigration law.

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## **SESSION III**

### **VICTIM SUPPORT SYSTEMS, REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION**

#### **What Helps a Victim to Leave the Trafficking Environment?**

**Roman Krõlov**, NGO Eluliin, Estonia

Roman Krõlov presented the results of research into the needs of victims in connection with rehabilitation services and clarifying motivation factors that help them leave the trafficking environment. Vulnerable people (mostly women and children) who are recruited for trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes are left with significant physical, psychological and social injuries. For trafficking victims, it is almost impossible to leave the sexual exploitation environment on their own. Human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes and prostitution are closely linked.

Krõlov interviewed 25 women between the ages of 23 and 53, 16 of whom had been in a human trafficking or prostitution environment and nine in the sphere of human trafficking and prostitution from 1 day to up to 19 years. The time it took for the women to quit the environment was from 3 months to 14 years. Factors that can cause involvement in trafficking and prostitution can be domestic violence, divorce, the loss of a job, conflict with partners and minor age. It can simply be the "romanticising" of the trafficking and prostitution environment or just to have an extraordinary experience or earn "easy money". Krõlov also explained the different stages in the psychosocial changes during the process of involvement in the trafficking and prostitution sphere: the first stage is stress, fear and shock; the next is a double life. During the first stage, the person wishes to be alone and may feel shame and hatred towards themselves and feel dirty, although there can also be other reactions, such as a lack of emotion. This can be a good stage for leaving the environment, Krõlov said. He also described the positive and negative consequences of having been in the trafficking/prostitution environment for some time: the positives are having cash and having enough money to buy a flat and to travel, while the negatives are losing contact with children and friends and the "humiliation of meeting former clients". Negative consequences are also connected to such changes in behaviour as becoming cruel and abandoning normal habits, as well as health problems like stress, becoming HIV-positive, falling into harmful habits and becoming addicted to alcohol and drugs.

Krõlov said that women who wish to leave the human trafficking environment say that they want to change their lives, they want to be normal and they do not want to be afraid. He said it is crucial for those who wish to change their lives to leave prostitution behind as soon as possible, because it is then easier to assist the victims. One of the challenges faced by



social workers is how to change routines in regard to spending money. The victims also need support networks.

Krölov concluded by summarising recommendations for preventing human trafficking/prostitution and for assisting victims by:

- a. Combatting domestic violence;
- b. Integrating gender equality at different levels of society (mostly on the legal job market);
- c. Providing programmes for the prevention and treatment of different forms of addiction (alcohol, drugs and gambling);
- d. Providing programmes to increase people's financial competence;
- e. Raising awareness of the problem of human trafficking in the public in general, and in vulnerable groups and among professionals and experts;
- f. Fighting the pimping, recruitment and buying of sex; and
- g. Supporting and developing specialised social exit programmes for victims and people involved in prostitution.

Krölov said that establishing institutional exit programmes could be one of the best solutions in helping people leave the trafficking/prostitution environment.

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Read the report

[http://norway-grants.eluliin.ee/images/pdf/Research\\_of\\_victims\\_needseng.pdf](http://norway-grants.eluliin.ee/images/pdf/Research_of_victims_needseng.pdf)

## **National Assistance System for Victims – Challenges and Solutions**

**Jari Kähkönen**, Director, National Help Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking, Joutseno Reception Centre, Finland

Jari Kähkönen introduced the *National Help Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking in Finland*. The system is administered by the Joutseno Reception Centre and was merged with the *Finnish Immigration Services* in 2017. The victim assistance system in Finland is a state agency fully funded from the government budget. Its duties are set out in the *Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and on the Identification of and Aid to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings* (746/2011).

The main task of the Finnish assistance system is to help victims return to normal social life. The system provides the victim with subsistence and care, taking into consideration the victim's special needs and the requirements arising from their age, vulnerability and physical and mental state. Security considerations must also be taken into account. It is important to get a good lawyer for the victim to support them during legal processes. Kähkönen pointed out that becoming victim can happen abroad or in Finland. There is a very low threshold for victims to obtain help in Finland: both Finns and foreigners, legal and illegal immigrants can be accepted into the assistance system. He also said that a criminal process is not a prerequisite to be accepted and that there is no need for complete certainty that a person is a victim of human trafficking either. The system can grant a recovery period of a minimum of 30 days, which can be extended to a maximum of 90 days. A reflection period can be granted to those who do not have a legal right of residence in Finland, from 30 days up to six months. In Finland the pre-trial investigation authority, the prosecutor, the Finnish Immigration Service and the Joutseno Reception Centre can identify victims.



Kähkönen said that the system always assesses the situation for each client individually, and when a victim is taken into the system their permission is always needed. An officially identified victim of human trafficking is entitled to the services of the system until the need for such services ceases, or the person themselves decides to leave the system.

Kähkönen summed up by listing the services offered to victims:

- Guidance and counselling
- Legal advice
- Emergency aid (including therapy)
- Social and health care services
- Interpreting and other support services
- Accommodation or housing
- Reception allowance/income support and other necessary care
- Support for a safe return

The assistance system covers the costs of victims who are not living in Finland. For others, the municipality in which the victim lives covers the assistance costs and provides the services. The assistance system supports the municipality so that the victim gets the help to which they are entitled.

The assistance system is a consultant to other officials, monitors to ensure that a victim's rights are fulfilled, supports the courts and the police in investigations and cooperates with the Finnish Immigration Office and NGOs. The system is obliged to inform the police every time a person is taken into the system.

Kähkönen presented figures about victims of human trafficking in Finland, saying that growth in the number of victims has been rapid: from 10 in 2010 to more than 170 so far in 2017. The total number in 2016 was 167 victims. In 2016, 71% of the victims were women, of whom 50% were sexually exploited. Most victims came from Africa, with 50% coming from Nigeria. Among new victims, 50% of women were sexually exploited and 80% of men were exploited on the labour market. In most of the sexual exploitation cases the exploitation happened abroad, while with labour exploitation the majority of cases occurred in Finland.

Kähkönen ended his presentation by saying that cross-border cooperation is all-important, since victims are sent from country to country. He said that countries should have bilateral agreements and common rules so that victims can get the help they need in the country of destination. He stressed that men also need help and that they have different needs from women. He said that in Finland the authorities and organisations trust in the victims' stories, and according to Finnish law the decision should be in favour of the victim.

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### **Assistance for Victims – What Help Can an NGO Offer?**

**Kristina Mišiniienė**, Director, NGO Caritas Lithuania, Lithuania

Kristina Mišiniienė started by saying: "At all of these seminars and conferences I hear terrible stories about how victims of human trafficking are exploited and have to live under threat and in miserable conditions." She continued by stressing the importance of the NGOs that assist victims creating a network and coordinating their work. She described the help and assistance that NGOs in Lithuania can give victims. NGOs around Europe offer more or less

the same support to victims, but organisations and authorities can nevertheless have different views of what kind of help is best for victims of human trafficking.

Mišinienė said that it is important to find ways of providing assistance that support victims' everyday lives. All of the partners involved should cooperate in order to assist victims with both social and psychological support. Some women have been re-trafficked as many as 13 times to be used in prostitution. Mišinienė said: "We have already lost a lot of victims, so we have to join forces to stop the human traffickers."

NGO *Caritas Lithuania* has trained people to assist and support victims in court processes. The aim is to support them during police investigations and court cases, to assist them and to tell them why they should stand as witnesses in court, explaining what kind of information the police, prosecutor and judge need in order to convict the human trafficker.

Mišinienė ended by saying: "It is important to explain to the victims why they have to tell their story over and over again."

## SUMMARY

The Expert Forum discussed how to improve cooperation and exchange of information on human trafficking. The trends are quite similar in all of the Nordic and Baltic countries, so it is good to arrange such forums to share experience on the latest trends and knowledge. The participants pointed out that *the work can always be done better, but each country should be responsible for solving their share of cases and ensure that cases are not dropped* when handed over to another country. It was stressed that cooperation and collaboration are the key words: "The experts working to combat human trafficking should support one another, share information and as such save lives."

It is *crucial for the experts to listen to the victims* and to ask those who have survived about the kinds of assistance that have helped them in the process of making a new start in life. All of the parties involved, such as the state, municipality, relevant authorities and big companies, must take their share of responsibility, as must each and every individual.

*Raising awareness of victims* who are sexually exploited, forced into prostitution and forced to work *should be carried out in our societies*: informing school children, employers, social workers and migration authorities. There is still a need to inform all groups in society about human trafficking as the modern form of slavery. Christer Haglund said: "Hopefully through these kinds of conferences we can contribute to freeing the world of human trafficking."

### Summary of discussions

- More presentations at seminars on *specific cases with a focus on the country of destination and country of origin*. "It is good to hear about concrete cases and solutions, as it inspires us to develop our own work." A good example was the presentation of the case where a victim was assisted within a short time with repatriation from Denmark to Latvia.
- The presentation of the case from Iceland described *how many pitfalls there are in identifying a victim of human trafficking who is transported from one country to another*. It also presented a picture of how much information can get lost during an investigation when the experts involved are short on time and do not have enough basic knowledge of human trafficking, traffickers and victims. The presentation of

the case resulted in the countries involved stating that they would look at the case again to unearth more information about the victim and the case.

- The presentations about *African human trafficking victims in Europe* revealed that the traffickers bring the African victims to Europe and the authorities repatriate them to their country of origin. The question asked was: how can this be stopped?
- Victims of human trafficking cannot be pigeon-holed: there is no stereotypical victim. It was pointed out that a stereotypical description of a victim can blind experts, who then cannot see the real situation and the needs of the victim.

### **Proposals**

- More presentations on cases with a focus on the country of origin and country of destination
- Cross-border cooperation between countries – common agreements and rules on cooperation so that victims get the assistance they need
- Create a Nordic-Baltic network for organisations and institutions involved in human trafficking exit programmes