



COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

*REPORT OF THE EXPERTS GROUP ON TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS
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Combatting trafficking in human beings is a priority for the European Union. Through intensive cooperation and knowledge sharing between various NGOs and expert organisations in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, the research hopes to contribute to the fight against human trafficking in the Baltic Sea region. The study provides an overview of the current state of human trafficking based on relevant national statistics, the most common types of human trafficking, existing prevention strategies, as well as the best practices employed by anti-trafficking organisations and governmental agencies.



Kova su prekyba žmonėmis yra Europos Sąjungos prioritetas. Intensyviai bendradarbiaujant ir dalijantis žiniomis tarp įvairių nevyriausybiinių ir ekspertinių organizacijų Lietuvoje, Latvijoje bei Estijoje, šiuo tyrimu tikimasi prisidėti prie kovos su prekyba žmonėmis Baltijos jūros regione. Tyrime pateikiama dabartinės prekybos žmonėmis padėties apžvalga, pagrįsta atitinkamais nacionaliniais statistiniais duomenimis, aptariamais dažniausiai pasitaikančios prekybos žmonėmis rūšys ir egzistuojančios prevencijos strategijos. Taip pat dalijamasi gerųjų praktikų pavyzdžiais, kuriuos taiko kovos su prekyba žmonėmis organizacijos bei vyriausybės įstaigos.



Cilvėku tirdzniecības apkarošana ir Eiropas Savienības prioritāte. Sagatavotais pētījums par cilvēku tirdzniecības novēršanas darbu Lietuvā, Latvijā un Igaunijā dos ieguldījumu cīņā pret cilvēku tirdzniecību Baltijas jūras reģionā. Pētījumā tiek aplūkoti tādi jautājumi kā pašreizējais stāvoklis cilvēku tirdzniecības novēršanas jomā, pamatojoties uz attiecīgo valsts statistiku, izplatītākajiem cilvēku tirdzniecības veidiem, esošajām prevencijas stratēģijām, kā arī cilvēku tirdzniecības novēršanas jomā strādājošo organizāciju un valsts institūciju izmantoto labāko praksi.



Inimkaubanduse vastu võitlemine on Euroopa Liidu prioriteet. Läbi tõhusa koostöö ja teadmiste jagamise erinevate vabaühenduste ja ekspertorganisatsioonide vahel Leedus, Lätis ja Eestis, loodab uurimistöö kaasa aidata inimkaubanduse vastasele võitlusele Läänemere piirkonnas. Uurimistöö annab ülevaate inimkaubanduse hetkeseisust, tuginedes asjakohasele riigi statistikale, enamlevinud inimkaubanduse liikidele, olemasolevatele ennetusstrateegiatele ning inimkaubanduse vastaste organisatsioonide ja valitsusasutuste parimatele praktikatele.

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INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE

Trafficking in human beings is a serious problem that has significant adverse effects on modern society. For this reason, it is considered one of the EU's top ten crime priorities as established by its member states¹. At the European level, efforts have been made to combat human trafficking as part of a policy known as EMPACT. The acronym stands for European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats, with the main goal to improve integration and cooperation between member states to improve EU internal security issues, including anti-human trafficking measures. As shown by the report published by the Council of the European Union, 744 arrests and 1025 new criminal cases of human trafficking have been initiated across the EU². The size of the prevalence of trafficking schemes reveals the extent to which it has spread across the continent; hence, every member state is responsible for contributing to the fight against it.

Notably, the issue of human trafficking remains prevalent in the Baltic Sea region. As stated in the Human Trafficking – Baltic Sea Region Round-Up report, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are the countries with the high rates of labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, forced criminal exploitation, forced/sham marriages, as well as child exploitation, among other types³. Furthermore, the possibility of a rise in the number of cases is especially significant, given that thousands of war refugees have been fleeing to the Baltic countries in 2022 due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Hence, in order to educate the general public, inform policymakers, and foster inter-state collaboration, specialised support services must work together, share important data, and promote best practices. That is why the "They Have a Name" project was established to meet long-term CBSS (Council of the Baltic Sea States) priorities critical to enhancing societal security and safety in the Baltic Sea Region. The project's activities will contribute to combatting all forms of human trafficking in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

In this research, the partner organisations (Active Youth Association from Lithuania, MTÜ Eluliin from Estonia and The society "Shelter" Safe House"" from Latvia) present readers with an overview of the state of human trafficking in each of the three Baltic nations, including the most recent relevant statistics, the current status of anti-trafficking legislation, and the leading active anti-trafficking organisations. In addition, each project partner will outline the most prevalent types of trafficking in each country, as well as the prevention strategies implemented in the Baltic States, including the measures taken by NGOs and governmental agencies to combat trafficking in human beings. The research will conclude with a discussion of the most effective ways to provide psychological support to victims of trafficking, as well as how other organisations and the general public should approach victims in need of assistance.

¹ Council of the European Union, "EMPACT: 10 EU Crime Priorities," 2022, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-07/2022_112_EMPACT%20handbook.pdf

² Council of the European Union, "EMPACT: General Factsheet - Operational Action Plans (OAPS)", 2020, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50209/empact_factsheet_20.pdf

³ Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), "Human Trafficking – Baltic Sea Region Round-Up," 2020, https://cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CBSS_Report_25.06.2020.pdf

INTRODUCTION

CONCEPTS AND TERMS

- **HUMAN TRAFFICKING/TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS**

The UNODC defines human trafficking as the use of force or deception to recruit, transport, transfer, harbour, or receive individuals for the purpose of exploiting them for financial gain.⁴ This is a global phenomenon that affects people of all ages, genders, and walks of life in every part of the globe. Europol recognises human trafficking as a type of modern slavery.⁵

- **VICTIMS/SURVIVORS**

The terms victims and survivors are often used interchangeably to refer to those who have been the subject of human trafficking. Notably, anyone can become the subject of trafficking, regardless of nationality, gender identity, citizenship, disability, age, or level of education. Despite this, most nations report having the main victim category, which primarily consists of marginalised community members and other vulnerable individuals.

- **TRAFFICKERS/PERPETRATORS**

Individuals or groups of criminals that engage in the trafficking of people and the exploitation of victims for the goal of financial gain can be referred to as human traffickers or perpetrators. Human traffickers may originate from any part of society, whether they are citizens of the EU, nationals of another country, friends, strangers, or even family members.³

- **TYPES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Trafficking in human beings is a criminal activity that may take on a variety of different forms, most of which are determined by the motivations behind the trafficking. The exploitation of the victim is common to all types of trafficking, notwithstanding the diversity of the forms that this crime might take.

- **SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

Victims of sexual exploitation are trafficked by the perpetrators to engage in commercial sexual activities through the use of threats, deceit, or other forms of coercion. Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a heavily gendered issue; in fact, women and girls make up 94% of all victims of sexual exploitation, as reported by UNODC.⁶

- **FORCED LABOUR/LABOUR EXPLOITATION**

Victims trafficked for the purposes of labour exploitation are coerced to do work or provide services against their will, often under the fear of being punished. According to the UNODC data, adult men constitute the majority of forced labour victims.⁷

4 Human-Trafficking," United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-Trafficking/Human-Trafficking.html>

5 "Trafficking in Human Beings," Europol. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/crime-areas/trafficking-in-human-beings>.

6 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018," 2018, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTIP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf

7 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Trafficking for forced labour: The Economy of coercion," Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2020 https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTIP_2020_Chapter4.pdf

INTRODUCTION

CONCEPTS AND TERMS

- **FORCED CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION**

Criminal exploitation is a form of trafficking that forces victims to participate in a variety of criminal activities, typically under the control of organised criminal groups.⁸ Perpetrators may coerce victims to engage in theft, robbery, drug dealing, forced begging, as well as fraud and financial crimes.

- **FORCED MARRIAGE/SHAM MARRIAGES**

There is a clear distinction between the two forms of trafficking involving marriage: forced marriage is defined as a union in which one or both parties do not freely and knowingly enter into the union, whereas sham marriage typically takes place as a means to circumvent immigration laws.⁹ Forced marriages often lead to the subsequent sexual exploitation or servitude of the victim. In the case of sham marriages, the perpetrator usually uses the victim to get a financial advantage from the person who pays for the marriage to take place to evade immigration regulations.

- **TRAFFICKING ROUTES**

States play various roles in the trafficking industry; notably, the country's socioeconomic conditions greatly impact its contribution to the trafficking sector. Different countries can be classified as the country of origin (source), a transit country or a country of final destination.¹⁰

- **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (SOURCE)**

The countries of origin are those that source the supply of people who are being trafficked. In most cases, developing states account for the vast majority of source countries for traffickers.

- **TRANSIT COUNTRY**

The term transit countries refers to nations that facilitate specific pathways for victims of human trafficking to travel through their territory. They serve as the bridge between the country of origin and the country of destination.

- **COUNTRY OF DESTINATION**

The nations with the greatest demand for human trafficking are known as destination countries. These states are often more economically developed since they have greater availability of financial resources to pay for the services of victims who have been trafficked. At this time, Europe is the largest region for the trafficking sector from a destination standpoint.⁸

- **VICTIM-CENTRED APPROACH**

UNHCR defines the victim-centred approach as a way of interacting with victims that fosters listening, prevents re-traumatization and consistently prioritises the safety, rights, well-being, needs, and choices of all individuals affected by trafficking.¹¹ The approach places emphasis on providing victims with as much control as is practically possible, as well as ensuring the delivery of services in an empathic and non-judgmental way.

8 "What Is Criminal Exploitation?," Stop the traffik, February 4, 2020, <https://www.stopthetraffik.org/criminal-exploitation/>.

9 "Trafficking in Persons & Smuggling of Migrants Module 11 Key Issues: SOM or Tip - Forced Marriage", UNODC, 2019, <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/zh/tip-and-som/module-11/key-issues/som-or-tip---forced-marriage.html>.

10 "How Do Countries Contribute to Human Trafficking?," Dressemer (Dressemer, April 29, 2021), <https://www.dressemer.org/blog/how-do-countries-contribute-to-human-trafficking>.

11 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "A Victim-Centred Approach," <https://www.unhcr.org/victim-care.html>.

STATE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN LITHUANIA: NATIONWIDE STATISTICS AND PRIMARY ANTI-TRAFFICKING ORGANISATIONS

In 2021, Lithuania reported 26 victims and 24 in 2020.¹² These numbers have decreased compared to the previous years, corresponding to 39 victims in 2019, and 44 in 2018. However, this reduction in the numbers is not one to be taken lightly, as circumstances have also changed during the pandemic. Traffickers' recruitment strategies have evolved from in-person to online settings, primarily through social media, making it even more difficult for authorities to trace victims and identify traffickers.

Moreover, when examining the topic of human trafficking, it is important to note that both men and women are affected by the issue. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania publishes annual reports that detail the changing demographics of persons impacted by trafficking. As shown in Figure 1, women constituted the majority of trafficking victims in 2018 and 2020, with men being the majority in 2019 and 2021. As the numbers fluctuate yearly, it is impossible to determine the primary victim category by gender.

Figure 1. Victims of human trafficking in Lithuania by gender.¹

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Men	9	18	7	15
Women	34	17	16	10
Children	1	4	1	1
Total	44	39	24	26

Within this framework, research conducted by UN Women shows that between 2017 and 2019, Lithuania continued to be the country with the highest number of male victims of human trafficking. At the same time, women made up an alarming 77% of victims in 2018 and 67% in 2020, making it essential for government authorities and non-profit groups to consider both genders in¹³ their prevention and rehabilitation efforts.

¹² Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, "Anti-trafficking monitoring reports," 2018 - 2021, <https://vrm.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys/viesasis-saugumas-1/kova-su-prekyba-zmonemis-1>

¹³ UN Women, "Trafficking in women and girls Report", 2020, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/a-75-289-sg-report-trafficking>

Figure 2. Victims of human trafficking in Lithuania by origin.¹

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Lithuanians	44	33	21	24
EU Citizens	0	2	1	0
Third-Country Nationals	0	4	2	2

In addition, the age category of trafficking victims also varies, but as shown in Figure 3, young people (18-30) constitute the majority of those trafficked in Lithuania. The second most vulnerable category is predominantly individuals aged 31-40. Hence, the issue disproportionately affects Lithuanian youth, with this group accounting for 42% to 64% of victims over the past 4 years.

Figure 3. Victims of human trafficking in Lithuania by age.¹

	2018	2019	2020	2021
0 - 17	1	4	1	1
18 - 30	28	26	13	11
31 - 40	13	9	2	7
41 - 50	1	0	4	2
51 - 60	1	2	1	0
61 and older	0	0	3	5

With that in mind, human trafficking is a type of criminal activity that is difficult to track since it spans beyond the borders of a single country, and victims are frequently afraid to report the problem. Hence, the victim profile is solely based on the cases that were documented by the local authorities.

Moreover, the tactics utilised by Lithuanian authorities to prosecute the perpetrators are a staple in combating the issue. Firstly, in the Lithuanian criminal code, articles 147 and 157 expressively criminalise sex trafficking and labour trafficking, with prescribed penalties ranging from 2 to 12 years of imprisonment.¹⁴ Five specialised prosecutors in the country have been able to sentence 30 traffickers in 2021.¹⁵ Though it is usually hard to gather evidence to be able to prosecute, Lithuanian authorities have been very efficiently collaborating with other European police departments to tackle the massive international criminal networks behind human trafficking.

Furthermore, the main organisations working with human trafficking victims are listed below.

Figure 4. The list of Lithuanian organisations working with human trafficking victims

Name in Lithuanian	Name in English	Phone Number	Email Address	Website
Nacionalinė asociacija prieš prekybą žmonėmis	National Association Against Human Trafficking	+370 617 99457	info@stop-trafficking.lt	www.stop-trafficking.lt
KOPŽI	Center Against Human Trafficking and Exploitation	+370 679 61617	info@anti-trafficking.lt	www.anti-trafficking.lt
Lietuvos Caritas	The Lithuanian Caritas	+370 37 20 54 27	caritas@lcn.lt	www.caritas.lt
International Organisation for Migration - Lietuvoje	International Organisation for Migration	+370 5 212 76 53	iomvilnius@iom.lt	www.iom.lt
Dingusių žmonių šeimų paramos centras	Lithuanian Missing Persons' Families Support Center	+370 5 248 3373	centras@missing.lt	www.missing.lt
VšĮ Diversity Development Group	Diversity Development Group	+370 607 66902	info@diversitygroup.lt	www.diversitygroup.lt

¹⁴ President of the Republic of Lithuania, "Law on the Approval of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania," 2010, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/28b18041843311e89188e16a6495e98c>

¹⁵ Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, "2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Lithuania," U.S. Department of State, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/lithuania/>

These non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can assist trafficking victims by spreading awareness and ensuring transparency about the state of human trafficking in Lithuania, providing indicators that a person may be a victim of human trafficking, as well as clarifying and disseminating information about where people can go to receive assistance (list of contacts). In addition to this, they can strengthen ties with other organisations that deal with trafficking in neighbouring countries, mainly to assist in the cases of large flows of irregular migrants who are at high risk.

TRAFFICKING IN LITHUANIA: THE MOST COMMON TYPES

Major forms of trafficking in persons and primary victim groups

According to the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons report, several forms of exploitation in Lithuania are noteworthy, including sex labour, forced labour, forced criminal exploitation and, to a lesser extent, forced marriages. Notably, Lithuania is mainly a source country of human trafficking, meaning it is more likely for a Lithuanian to be trafficked than for Lithuania to be a country of destination.¹⁶ The index also indicates that, historically, trafficking victims reside in the country's poorest regions.

Typically, the traffickers in rural areas persuade the victims, who usually have a minimum level of foreign language proficiency, to go abroad and earn a significantly higher income. The promised salary is usually enough to solve the economic issues of those forced into human trafficking. According to the prosecutor of the Organised Crime and Corruption Investigation Department of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Lithuania, socially vulnerable people could get involved by simply answering a job ad online.¹⁷ Alternatively, victims may be persuaded by a trusted individual who is also unaware that they are both slipping into the human traffickers' trap, and, for this reason, even reliable people may inadvertently be promoting human trafficking.

¹⁶ Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, "Global Organized Crime Index 2021," 2021, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/GITOC-Global-Organized-Crime-Index-2021.pdf>

¹⁷ Marcinkutė, L., "Human Trafficking - How Not to Fall into Modern Slavery," Live Lithuania, 2022, <https://liveithuania.net/en/2022/03/27/human-trafficking-how-not-to-fall-into-modern-slavery/>

Overall, the most vulnerable groups are economically disadvantaged; among them, it is important to mention foreign residents in Lithuania. Even though the perpetrators mostly target Lithuanian citizens, foreign nationals residing in Lithuania are also the target of human traffickers since they lack a strong social support system. In this case, traffickers use a similar tactic of offering a very high income in exchange for non-existing jobs. Moreover, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has led more than 60,000 Ukrainians to register as refugees in the country, exposing many of them to human traffickers and causing great concern to Lithuanian authorities.

Moreover, the instances of international child trafficking have been of concern to the Lithuanian government during the past few years, even though it is substantially less prevalent than other types of trafficking. Despite being less common, it remains a significant issue, as Freedom House reported instances of Lithuanian children being exploited for sex trafficking as recently as in 2021. Moreover, people with intellectual disabilities, mental disorders and alcohol or drug addiction constitute another vulnerable group. The individuals' psychological fragility makes them a good target for the deceptive strategies of traffickers, who can use their vulnerability to earn trust.¹⁸

Figure 5 indicates a shift in the most common types of trafficking in Lithuania in 2021, with cases of forced criminal exploitation and forced labour outnumbering instances of sexual exploitation. Hence, in comparison to 2018, only a small number of victims were coerced into sexual exploitation. Forced marriages are far less common, with only three instances reported in 2020.

Figure 5. Human trafficking victims in Lithuania by trafficking kind, 2018-2021

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sexual exploitation	31	17	9	3
Forced labour	5	9	6	10
Forced marriages	0	0	3	0
Forced criminal exploitation	8	13	6	13

¹⁸ LRT, "Ukrainian Refugees Become Target for Human Traffickers in Lithuania," Lrt.lt, 2022, <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1658515/ukrainian-refugees-become-target-for-human-traffickers-in-lithuania>

In addition, the registered cases have shown a direct relationship between the type of trafficking and the victim's gender. Women are the primary victims of sexual exploitation and forced marriages, while men are the main targets of forced labour and forced criminal exploitation.

Figure 6. Human trafficking victims in Lithuania by trafficking type and gender, 2018-2021.

	Men	Women
Sexual exploitation	1	59
Forced labour	25	5
Forced marriages	0	3
Forced criminal exploitation	33	7
Total	59	74

Trafficking routes and destination countries

Lithuania is commonly chosen as a country of transit by traffickers, as it represents one of the main entrances into the European Union, especially from Belarus and Russia. Consequently, people are smuggled directly to Western European countries.¹⁹ Most Lithuanian victims are trafficked to the United Kingdom, Germany, and Spain. The recent trends indicate an increase in the number of males trafficked there for the purposes of forced labour. However, despite it being less common, Lithuania is also a human trafficking destination.

¹⁹ EUROPOL - EMSC European Migrant Smuggling Centre, "European Migrant Smuggling Centre 6th Annual Report," 2022, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EMSC%206%20th%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN LITHUANIA

Human trafficking is a very complex subject; thus, citizens must be made aware of the dangers of trafficking and the strategies employed by human traffickers to improve the help provided to victims and preventive efforts. Lithuania is considered to fully meet the minimum standards in terms of prosecution, protection and prevention of human trafficking. The Republic of Lithuania is putting measures in place to combat human trafficking in accordance with the Inter-institutional Action Plan for Implementing the Programme for the Development of Public Safety (2015-2025) and the Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking (2017-2019). Both Action Plans include the following activities: specialised training, public education and prevention, victim aid, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Both plans and activities are subject to quarterly assessments conducted by the Commission for the Coordination of the Fight Against Human Trafficking, the National Reporter on the Fight Against Human Trafficking, and the Committee on Human Rights of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, which also provides suggestions for improving said plans and activities.

The Anti-Trafficking Coordination Commission was able to provide government institutions and NGOs with anti-trafficking guidance and training. Additionally, the government participated in a range of awareness-raising activities, including producing and distributing pamphlets containing information on trafficking in Lithuania, indicators of potential victims, and a QR code system directing professionals to the victims through a referral mechanism.

Lithuanian authorities have participated, alongside the other Baltic Sea Region countries, in a project in which the main aim is to educate future journalists on human trafficking and the activities of this project led to the publication of guidelines on how to report trafficking cases. This has been done to avoid stereotypes, as well as the reinforcement of misperceptions and myths about trafficking, which also play a key role in tackling the issue.

Lithuania has also made some efforts to create more opportunities for people to get in touch with the police, as it has been identified as a critical prevention aspect. Lithuanian authorities financed the creation of an email account to report trafficking and solicit advice, as well as a 24-hour national hotline available in multiple languages. The latter has been maintained due to the productive collaboration amongst NGOs, with the number receiving 44 trafficking-related calls so far.

LITHUANIA

BEST PRACTICES

THE MOST SUITABLE WAYS TO PROVIDE MENTAL SUPPORT TO VICTIMS IN LITHUANIA

Governmental efforts

In 2021, the Lithuanian government adopted the Law on Assistance to Victims of Crime: it ensured all victims of all crimes, including trafficking, receive assistance before, during, and, if necessary, after criminal proceedings. Lithuanian law also entitled all crime victims, including trafficking victims, access to support, including counselling, regardless of whether victims sought assistance from law enforcement. This significant effort has been possible thanks to a substantial sum invested in prevention efforts: €300.000 have been given to NGOs to assist victims of human trafficking.¹ Victim protection became a pivotal point as the authorities decided to invest in care facilities that could provide victims with psychological support and temporary shelter. Different crisis centres received additional funding in order to provide more accessible quality assistance.

National Association Against Human Trafficking (NAPPŽ)

A significant step towards the development of human trafficking victim support in Lithuania was the establishment of an umbrella organisation. In 2019 the National Association Against Human Trafficking (NAPPŽ) was established in order to ensure quality coordinated efforts to assist victims of trafficking. The association mobilises 6 NGOs and partners with 2 charitable organisations in order to guarantee comprehensive and accessible victim support across the country. The association members are qualified to provide complex assistance from legal and material to psychological and emotional support.

The range of psychosocial services provided includes developing an individual support plan, psychological counselling, psychotherapy, social support in restoring connections with the victims' relatives and close friends, encouragement and support for enriching leisure activities, training in social skills, and accompanying victims to relevant agencies and procedures. Counselling is made available via a variety of methods: telephone, email, face-to-face and remote interactive Skype sessions.

The director of the Center Against Human Trafficking and Exploitation, Kristina Mišiniienė, stresses the importance of accompanying the victims: "To truly support and pull the victim out of their former life, you have to go all the way together: dealing with domestic, psychological, complex bureaucratic issues, dealing with institutional challenges hand in hand"²⁰. This way, great significance is placed not only on seeking justice for the victim but also helping them reintegrate into society and equipping them with the necessary tools and knowledge to avoid being recruited back into the vicious cycle. The victims usually partake in long-term (over 6 months) support from the association members and use the range of services available to reintegrate into the labour market. The NGOs help with paperwork, cooperation, and mediation, provide assistance in preparing for job interviews and job search.

The member organisation KOPŽI also participated in writing a comprehensive guide for officer communication with victims of various crimes alongside the Human Rights Monitoring Institute.²¹ According to the member NGOs¹, law enforcement still did not utilise a victim-centred approach, contributing to a lack of trust on the part of victims toward officers, which further hampers law enforcement efforts to combat human trafficking.

LITHUANIA

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As contact with law enforcement is often crucial in the process of providing support for the victims, it is essential to avoid secondary victimisation throughout the process and further afflict their emotional state. The guide includes specific tips on how to approach, build trust, and ensure the safety and well-being of human trafficking victims.

Communication and advocacy

An incredibly pivotal part of why it is so difficult to trace the actual numbers of trafficking victims is the public discourse and awareness surrounding human trafficking and the activities victims are trafficked into. Besides enduring highly traumatic situations, the victims also bear extensive amounts of shame and guilt for ever becoming part of such 'shameful' experiences.¹⁰ This state is further amplified by the negative public attitude, mainly victim blaming, which has a noticeable negative effect on the well-being of victims. The Lithuanian Women's Rights Enforcement Association director emphasises that public ridicule and victim blaming not only negatively affect the victims already on trial but also discourage other victims from seeking help. This attitude held by both public and institutional actors affects victims of various kinds of abuse "so they remain silent and are unable to fight on two fronts - against the abusers, and also against the institutions, the society, which condemns or doubts them".²²

Precisely for these reasons, the Center Against Human Trafficking and Exploitation (KOPŽI) invests significant effort into communication. The organisation uses both the press and social media platforms to regularly raise public awareness about the struggles faced by human trafficking victims to help relieve some of the pressure they are already battling. KOPŽI has published or provided comments for over 60 articles in the press in 2022 alone. The texts range from trafficking stories and difficulties faced solving the cases to deeper insights about the amount of courage needed to proceed towards the trial. These efforts are not just valuable for gaining public support for the organisations working with human trafficking. Informing the general public is crucial in order to foster compassion and provide comfort for those already often ostracised from society.

The efforts to combat the lack of public awareness do not end here. KOPŽI also strives to familiarise the general public with the gruesome process of the trials and the issues with not using a victim-centred approach. The organisation uses their platform to report incidents of traffickers and lawyers threatening or agitating victims as they were entering or exiting the courtroom and the issues of them having to face their aggressors in narrow court corridors. The victims "are threatened, retaliated against, sought to be recruited back into criminal activity, and pressured by their torturers to drop the case".⁹ The organisation also advocates for other changes in the judiciary and policy. As sexual exploitation has consistently been the primary goal of trafficking in Lithuania up until last year, Lithuanian human trafficking NGOs also actively endorse prostitution exit programs and endorse criminalising those who purchase these services instead of those who engage in sex work. Consequently, actively working towards necessary changes in the system by raising public support for them can help significantly improve the well-being of human trafficking victims.

20 Kazarian, S., "K. Mišiniénė: Migrantai Tampa Darbdavių Išnaudojimo Aukomis," *Isveikat.lt*, 2021, <https://isveikata.lt/aktualijos/k-misiniene-migrantai-tampa-darbdaviu-isnaudojimo-aukomis-14247>

21 Žmogaus Teisių Stebėjimo Institutas, "Pareigūno bendravimas su nukentėjusiais: Praktinis vadovas," 2019, <https://hrmi.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Praktinis-vadovas-2018.pdf>

22 Platūkytė, D., "Sutuoktinę Vyras Mušė Grandinėmis, Lazdomis – Nors Fizinės Žaizdos Sugyja, Psichologinė Trauma Lieka Ilgam" *LRT*, 2022, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1804987/sutuoktine-vyras-muse-grandinemis-lazdomis-nors-fazines-zaizdos-sugyja-psichologine-trauma-lieka-ilgam>

STATE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN LATVIA: NATIONWIDE STATISTICS AND PRIMARY ANTI-TRAFFICKING ORGANISATIONS

Human trafficking tendencies have been changing over the years, as well as the number of trafficked persons. Latvia is considered the country of origin, destination country, and transit country of victims of human trafficking. Latvia is also a country where the trafficking of human beings takes place internally without crossing national borders. Statistics show that the number of documented cases has been growing over the years.²³

Figure 7. Victims of human trafficking in Latvia by origin.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Latvians	34	10	19	23	23	15	17	59
Third country nationals	0	0	0	2	0	24	31	2
EU citizens	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	34	11	19	23	23	39	48	61

Till the year 2018 total number of documented cases of trafficking was less than 30, but the last year's number has doubled, as in 2021, the total number of cases was 61. The growing number is explained by the active work of the State Police. The other tendency is the changing origin of the victims. Until 2018, there were in total just two documented cases where victims were third-country nationals, but since 2019, the number has increased significantly. The growing number stopped in 2021, as the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions possibly influenced the ability to travel and work abroad. It is possible that with the annulment of the travel restrictions, the number might grow.

Victims who are third-country nationals come from countries such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Moldova, with all of the documented cases till 2022 being victims of labour exploitation. In the most recent years, labour exploitation has been considered the most common form of trafficking in Latvia. In 2021, statistics showed that 53 of 61 cases were labour exploitation. The statistics also show that most forced labour victims are men, but victims of sexual exploitation are women; therefore, most of the documented cases in recent years are men, as the common form of trafficking in human beings is labour exploitation.²⁴

²³ "Pārskats Par Cilvēku Tirdzniecības Situāciju Latvijā 2021. Gadā," 2021, http://www.cilvektirdznieciba.lv/uploads/files/ct_parskats_2021.pdf

²⁴ Lekšlietu Ministrija, "Pārskats par cilvēku tirdzniecības novēršanu un apkarošanu Latvijā 2020.gadā," 2020, http://www.cilvektirdznieciba.lv/uploads/files/lv_thb_zinojums_2020.pdf

As mentioned, persons trafficked from other countries are mainly third-country nationals. In 2020 most victims were third-country nationals - 18 persons from Tajikistan, 7 persons from India, and 6 from Uzbekistan. All the cases are labour exploitation - 22 cases in the construction industry, 7 in the food production industry, and 2 in the agricultural industry. All the exploited third-country nationals are men seeking better opportunities in the European Union to support their families. Despite the country of origin, most victims of forced labour are men. In 2021, only 2 victims were third-country nationals, 59 were Latvians, with 49 men and 4 women being the victims of forced labour. Regarding sexual exploitation, most victims are women, as in 2021, all victims of sexual exploitation and sham marriages were women (7 sexual exploitation, 1 sham marriage). Most victims of human trafficking come from the risk groups of society, such as unemployed people, job seekers, women, persons of preretirement age, persons with no or low level of education, persons with mental disabilities and others who are the main target for different types of exploitation.

Examining the signs of human trafficking

There are numerous methods for detecting trafficking cases. Signs of trafficking are examined by different institutions such as The State Border Guard of the Republic of Latvia, The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, consular departments, departments of social services and others who then reach out to the State police or to the two authorised non-governmental organisations "Shelter "Safe House"" or "Marta Centre". In 2021, most cases were detected under police investigation, constituting 49 cases in total, where one person asked for help from the department of social services, and 11 persons reached out to authorised non-governmental organisations. Most cases that were detected under the investigation of police were redirected to non-governmental organisations, as they can recognise a person as the victim of human trafficking in a very short period of time, but for police, the investigation process takes much longer. Doing so makes it feasible to offer assistance to the victim as quickly as possible.²³

Anti-human trafficking legislation in Latvia

Following the changing trends of human trafficking, national and international legislation is also adopted. Action plans, different agreements and commitments emphasise human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation. In Latvia, there is no precedent of conviction for perpetrators of labour exploitation. Different international organisations have highlighted Latvia's issues regarding labour exploitation. GRETA (A Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings) emphasises the need for better detection and investigation of forced labour as well as reviewing the legal framework to prevent exploitation of third-country nationals for the purposes of labour exploitation.²⁵

²⁵ GRETA - Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, "Evaluation Report Latvia," 2022, <https://rm.coe.int/greta-implementation-report-third-evaluation-round-on-latvia/1680a59480>

In 2020, the period of operation of the "Guidelines for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2014-2020" was completed in Latvia. In 2021, the prevention policy for human trafficking was based on Cabinet Regulation No 690, "National Action Plan against trafficking in human beings 2021-2023".⁴ The plan was based on the most important anti-trafficking legislation. In this plan, 31 actions are divided into four directions:

1. Prevention - educational activities for different groups, such as the national institutions, schools, social workers etc., awareness campaigns for different groups of society.
2. Defence - legal framework on victim protection, provision of social services for victims, reintegration activities, and others.
3. Prosecution of perpetrators - seeking information and investigating the matter to prosecute the traffickers.
4. Cooperation - private sector, the states and municipal sector cooperation for effective communication.²⁶

In 2021, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior of Latvia, Dimitrijs Trafimovs, signed a Joint Statement of commitment to work against human trafficking for labour exploitation in the Baltic Sea Region. By signing this commitment, Latvia and nine other countries commit to ensure capacity building and training for different groups (prosecutors, judges etc.) to help identify those who are already victims of human trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation. Additionally, the commitment strives to ensure dialogue, effective communication and mutual assistance among different authorities. Lastly, the Joint Statement seeks to ensure criminal responsibility for all situations where workers are exploited by being subjected to unacceptable working conditions, among other actions.²⁷

The main organisations working with human trafficking victims in Latvia

In Latvia, two authorised non-governmental organisations are working with human trafficking victims - "Shelter "Safe House"" and "MARTA Centre". Society "Shelter "Safe House"" was established in 2007 to develop support services for victims of human trafficking, legal migrants, including asylum seekers, refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection status. In that same year, "Shelter "Safe House"" obtained the right to provide state-paid rehabilitation services to the victims of human trafficking, and the work continues till today. The organisation provides rehabilitation services to 246 clients. Organisation offers a 24/7 hotline for people to reach out about possible cases of trafficking in human beings and for the victims to reach out as well.²⁸

"MARTA Centre" is a non-profit organisation established in 2000, the only women's rights advocacy institution in Latvia. The organisation provides professional social, legal, and psychological services to adult victims of violence and trafficking in human beings.

²⁶ Ministru kabineta rīkojums Nr. 690, "Par Cilvēku Tirdzniecības Novēršanas Plānu 2021-2023. Gadam," Likumi, 2021, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/326420-par-cilveku-tirdzniecibas-noversanas-planu-2021-2023-gadam>

²⁷ Council of the Baltic Sea States, "Joint Statement of Commitment to Work against Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation in the Baltic Sea Region," 2021, <https://cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/joint-statement.pdf>

²⁸ "Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking," "Shelter "Safe House,"" <https://www.patverums-dm.lv/en/assistance-to-victims-of-human-trafficking>

It ensures assistance to women and their children in vulnerable life situations. The MARTA Centre" works mostly with victims of trafficking who are women.²⁹

Figure 8. The list of Latvian organisations working with human trafficking victims.

Name in Latvian	Name in English	Phone Number	Email Address	Website
"Patvērums "Drošā māja""	"Shelter "Safe House""	(+371) 28612120	drosa.maja@gmail.com	www.patverums-dm.lv
"Centrs MARTA"	"MARTA Centre"	(+371) 67378539	centrs@marta.lv	marta.lv/lv/

Both organisations are authorised to grant social rehabilitation services if the person reaches out to the organisation for support. In this case, the commission of professionals (lawyer, psychologist, social worker etc.) will listen to the survivor's story and decide if the person is a victim of human trafficking. The processes of commission and decision are regulated in Cabinet Regulation No. 344. This means that if the person refuses to go to the police or the police have stopped the investigation, the individual still can be granted social rehabilitation services, that in Latvia is 180 days in total for every victim. Social rehabilitation services include the support of professionals - lawyers, social workers, psychologists and others if needed, including shelter, medical care, maternal care and other acts of support based on the needs of the victim.

TRAFFICKING IN LATVIA: THE MOST COMMON TYPES

In most recent years, the most common form of trafficking in human beings is labour exploitation. Human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation or sham marriages, and other forms are not as common as in earlier years.²³

²⁹ Centrs MARTA, <https://marta.lv/en/>

Figure 9. Types of human trafficking in Latvia, 2014-2021.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Labour exploitation	11	0	4	8	11	28	37	53
Sexual exploitation	0	4	14	8	6	7	10	7
Sham marriages	22	5	1	8	5	3	1	1
Other	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0

The growing number of cases is not showing the effectiveness of the prevention work against trafficking in human beings, but at the same time, progress has been made in the ability of competent State and local government authorities to recognise the victims of human trafficking. The growing number of cases of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation has various reasons. One of the reasons is the lack of workforce and the need for guest workers in various fields of employment, such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. Cheap labour is good business for the perpetrator with a very low risk of being prosecuted, as forced labour is a form of human trafficking that lacks a strong legal framework, public awareness, and understanding. Another aspect that complicates the investigation and detection process is that forced labour is related to complex fields such as migration, "shadow economy", and financial crimes; therefore, it asks for multisectoral cooperation.³⁰

Recruitment of potential trafficking victims is also a changing trend. In 2021, the most common form of recruitment was through unknown people in homeless shelters on the streets with the offer of protection, work and support of the community, showing that the most vulnerable groups in Latvia are people without shelter and with low economic and other resources, often addicts and have mental disabilities.²³

It is not the case with victims from third countries. They are mostly recruited by people they know well. Recruiters often are from the same state and use victims' trust as the "verbal agreement", a fairly prevalent and strong form of agreement in most third countries. The "trust" prevents victims from seeing or even thinking about the potential risks of trafficking. When recruited to Latvia, most victims are faced with poor working conditions, but they do not have any mechanisms to seek help or escape the situation due to various reasons. For instance, they do not trust the state authorities as they are told that institutions are corrupt; they have an "artificial" debt to a recruiter; they have no information about the country they work in; threats and violence are used against them to prevent rebellious actions.³¹

³⁰ Ministru kabineta rīkojums Nr. 690, "Par Cilvēku Tirdzniecības Novēršanas Plānu 2021-2023. Gadam," Likumi, 2021, <https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2021/190.3>

³¹ Ministru kabineta rīkojums Nr. 690, "Par Cilvēku Tirdzniecības Novēršanas Plānu 2021-2023. Gadam," Likumi, 2021, <https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2021/190.3>

HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN LATVIA

According to the "National Action Plan against trafficking in human beings 2021-2023", one of the four main actions against trafficking in human beings is prevention. The prevention actions are based on educational and awareness-raising activities. Till 2023 there are plans to do two awareness-raising campaigns, 30 awareness-raising activities, to develop informational materials in several languages about the trafficking of human beings (risks, possible support, responsible authorities etc.). The state should also work on producing research, conducting around 100 informative activities in schools per year, as well as educational activities for different municipal and state professionals, such as social workers, judges, prosecutors, and others, on the topic of trafficking of human beings.

Another key element of prevention is interinstitutional cooperation. The Interinstitutional Working Group was developed in 2010 by the Prime Minister and consists of professionals from ministries, law enforcement authorities, NGOs, Ombudsman and others. This Working group has received a lot of criticism, as the group discusses questions that are not relevant or even doable. Hence, the Ombudsman suggests that the group discuss real issues that require specific tasks to be done so the results can be measured.²³

Human trafficking prevention and detection efforts rely heavily on educational and training programs. As the main expert in the field in Latvia, "Shelter "Safe House"" is a crucial partner for organising and hosting various trainings. One good example is cooperation with the municipality of Riga. The capital of Latvia has a big network of social departments and social workers, and sometimes social workers are the first ones to see the signs of trafficking in human beings as their clients are from the most vulnerable groups of society. However, social workers often are not trained to recognise the signs of trafficking; some lack the knowledge and experience. Therefore, "Shelter "Safe House"" approached Riga Municipality about organising training for social workers and police officers.

Since then, every year, 20-40 social workers and 20-40 policemen are trained and educated about signs of human trafficking, available support and recourses, special needs of the survivors and other important topics. Some participants in these training courses have no prior knowledge or expertise, and the majority wish to learn more about the subject. Training sessions produce positive outcomes; social workers receive an increasing number of calls concerning probable cases of human trafficking, and in 2022, "Shelter "Safe House"" admitted three survivors to social rehabilitation, who were identified in social departments.

THE MOST SUITABLE WAYS TO PROVIDE MENTAL SUPPORT TO VICTIMS IN LATVIA

The organisation "Shelter "Safe House"" has a team of professionals working together to support victims of trafficking. The team includes experienced lawyers, social workers, psychologists, social rehabilitators and other specialists if needed. With the changing trends of trafficking in human beings and with more third-country nationals recognised as victims of human trafficking, "Shelter "Safe House"" has additional resources to provide support.

The organisation generally works with two target groups - legal migrants from third countries and victims of human trafficking. The team of specialists are trained and experienced in both fields; therefore, if the survivor of trafficking is a third-country national, the organisation can provide support of interpreters, document translations, legal support, and assistance related to migration and legal status in Latvia, as well as psychological support especially tailored for migrants from third countries. For example, social work and rehabilitation professionals have the training and expertise to understand cultural norms and contextual factors, making them better equipped to facilitate successful social rehabilitation.

The experience of "Shelter "Safe House"" shows that it is challenging to explain the necessity of psychological support to victims from third countries, especially men. Due to the social stigma attached to talking about mental health, it can be challenging to explain to individuals that psychological care is crucial to their well-being. It takes as much intercultural knowledge as social work knowledge to explain and show the necessity of psychological support.

The organisation's experience also shows that mental support, especially the help of psychologists, is a crucial factor for the successful rehabilitation of survivors. For most victims, it is their first experience with such specialists, and fear often prevents them from seeking this support themselves. The support of psychologists is an expensive service in Latvia; however, it is very important for victims to receive this support for free and on a regular basis. In the team of specialists, "Shelter "Safe House"" has one psychologist, with the opportunity to employ more if needed. Psychologists provide emotional support to survivors through in-person and virtual sessions as well as support the team of other specialists. Psychologists can specify or indicate a direction for social workers, noting the client's capabilities or the needed time frame for some activities, such as starting employment or looking for a place to live.

Social rehabilitation service lasts 180 days for each client. Most of the time, these six months are far less than what is needed. For this reason, the social rehabilitation plan for the person is shaped and developed so that at the end of the program, survivors have gathered resources and support systems, such as social departments and social workers, family doctors, NGOs, non-profits and others. Victims are often unaware of their opportunities and rights, such as free psychological support through family doctors or psychological support for minors through social services. It is crucial to provide information about available resources and guide the victim to actually reach out for this support. When the rehabilitation process is complete, each client has a right to have five consultations (each one hour) with a chosen specialist for two years after the rehabilitation. It is a great chance to continue psychological support for the client if needed.

LATVIA

BEST PRACTICES

Another way to provide mental support to the victims, especially those who have used the support of rehabilitation services, is through different initiatives with the support of various projects and sponsors. The latest activity was a two-day camp of workshops for former clients - victims of trafficking in human beings who are men from third countries. Typically most initiatives are for women, and this was a great chance to support men as well. Since the clients were from third countries, the event's focus was integration and, most importantly, mental support, as these men live and work in Latvia alone, without their families and lack recreational activities and support in general. Within two days, participants and specialists visited different cities in Latvia, learned the culture and history of the country, and participated in different workshops to encourage their ability to show emotions, express their concerns and problems and seek support from each other. Most of the participants work in Latvia without full holidays and rarely have a chance to join different recreational activities within the community they are in, and this two-day camp was a motivational boost for their mental well-being.



STATE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ESTONIA: NATIONWIDE STATISTICS AND PRIMARY ANTI-TRAFFICKING ORGANISATIONS

Until 2018, only Estonian nationals have been identified as victims or alleged victims of human trafficking in the country. Estonia was formerly a country of origin or transit; however, as of 2019, it was also denoted as one of the destination countries. Furthermore, the number of third-country nationals involved in prostitution is on the rise, including individuals from Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, Brazil, Colombia, Japan, the Dominican Republic, and Nigeria. Similarly, multiple incidences of pimping involving both third-country and other nationals have been documented. From 2019 to 2021, Estonia has identified migrant women and men as presumed victims in pimping and labour exploitation proceedings. All third-country nationals were forced to leave Estonia, and the majority were banned from entering the Schengen zone. More and more people from outside of Europe are looking for work in Estonia, although no instances have reached the point of a criminal investigation.

Human trafficking statistics, legislation, and regulations

Overview and analysis of trafficking in human beings crime statistics, published by the Ministry of Justice.³²

Figure 10. Overview of human trafficking cases in Estonia.

Year	Registered crime	Judgments	Victims identified	Presumed victims identified
2018	46	22	10 (internal)	2 - sexual exploitation 33 - labour exploitation
2019	82	11	12 (internal)	54 - sexual exploitation 111 - labour exploitation
2020	80	11	5 (internal)	17 - sexual exploitation 20 - labour exploitation
2021	42	10	None	28 - sexual exploitation 7 - labour exploitation

³² "Inimkaubandus," Kriminaalpoliitika, 2018-2021.

Labour exploitation and sexual exploitation are the two forms of human trafficking that are observed in Estonia at the highest rates. In addition, the number of officially recorded offences went up between 2019 and 2020 but then started going down again in 2021. Further research is needed to understand why these numbers are fluctuating and how more effective interventions can be designed to reduce trafficking even further. More attention should be paid in Estonia to reducing the demand for human trafficking.

Figure 11. Victims of human trafficking in Estonia by origin, based on the Mittetulundusühing Eluliin internal data.

	Estonian citizens who benefited from assistance provided to victims of human trafficking (incl. accommodation)	Third-country nationals who benefited from assistance provided to victims of human trafficking (incl. accommodation)
2018	3	0
2019	10	55
2020	9	17
2021	0	5

Over recent years, the majority of human trafficking victims who have reached out to or were forwarded to Mittetulundusühing Eluliin are third-country nationals. The majority of these people have been subjected to human trafficking for the purposes of either sexual or labour exploitation. While the numbers of victims in 2018 and 2021 were lower than in the previous years, there has been a sharp increase in 2019. This implies that more emphasis should be placed on the vulnerabilities and exploitation of third-country nationals in Estonia. Also, children and persons with special needs or disabilities are at a higher risk of becoming victims of human trafficking, according to the Mittetulundusühing Eluliin practices.

In addition, the Penal Code and the Victim Support Act are the two main pieces of legislation in Estonia that address human trafficking. Crimes associated with human trafficking are defined in the Penal Code and include support of human trafficking, pimping, aiding prostitution, illegal conduct of human research, forcing or inducing a person to donate organs or tissue, illegal removal of organs or tissue, as well as human trafficking in respect to minors.³³ In the case of victims of human trafficking and state-run victim support organisations, the current Victim Support Act serves as the foundation, outlining the rights and required assistance.³⁴ The new Victim Support Act will come into force in 2023.

³³ Riigi Teataja, "Penal Code," 2022, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/530092022005/consolide/current>

³⁴ Riigi Teataja, "Victim Support Act," 2020, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/513052020004/consolide>

In addition, some of the main institutions and organisations combating the trafficking in human beings are listed below.

Figure 12. The list of Estonian organisations and governmental bodies working with human trafficking victims.

Name in Estonian	Name in English	Phone Number	Email Address	Website
Sotsiaalkindlustusamet	Social Insurance Board	+372 612 1360	info@sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee	sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee/en
Mittetulundusühing Eluliin	Mittetulundusühing Eluliin	+372 655 6140	admin@eluliin.ee	www.eluliin.ee/
Politsei- ja Piirivalveamet	Estonian Police and Border Guard Board	+372 612 3000	ppa@politsei.ee thb.info@politsei.ee	www.politsei.ee/en
Prokuratuur	Prosecutor's Office	+372 613 9400	info@prokuratuur.ee	www.prokuratuur.ee/en/ contacts/office-prosecutor-general
Riigikohus	Supreme Court of Estonia	+372 7 309 002	info@riigikohus.ee	www.riigikohus.ee/en/ supreme-court-estonia

According to the Victim Support Act, the Estonian Social Insurance Board has been responsible for centralising and coordinating all assistance provided to victims of human trafficking since 2019. Mittetulundusühing Eluliin is the only non-profit organisation in Estonia dealing with the issues of trafficking in human beings comprehensively since the year 2005. Eluliin organises training, public awareness activities, and events while also preparing guidelines and training materials, doing outreach work, conducting scientific studies and media campaigns, providing therapy and services for victims of trafficking in human beings, and participating in international and internal projects.

According to the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Police and Border Guard Board is responsible for conducting investigations into offences involving the trafficking in human beings.³⁵ To avoid defaming the party's honour or degrading the party's dignity, the police and Border Guard Board must take a victim-friendly approach during the investigations and proceedings. Furthermore, the prosecutor's office is a government agency within the Ministry of Justice's area of government that participates in the planning of surveillance necessary to combat and detect trafficking, directs pre-trial criminal proceedings under the Code of Criminal Procedure, and ensures its legality and efficiency. Lastly, Estonia's court system consists of three instances: County Courts are the first instance courts, Circuit Courts are the courts of the second instance, and the Supreme Court is the one in the third instance.

TRAFFICKING IN ESTONIA: THE MOST COMMON TYPES

Sexual exploitation and forced labour are the two most common types of trafficking in Estonia. Women and girls constitute the majority of sexual exploitation victims, whereas men are the likely victims of forced labour. Notably, between 2018 and 2021, sexual exploitation is connected to the vast majority of reported cases of human trafficking in the country. From 2018 onward, minors' exploitation was implicated in most human trafficking-related offences.

Figure 13. Victims of human trafficking in Estonia by gender.

	2018	2019	2020
Men	1	10	3
Women	2	2	1
Children (girls)	7	0	1

As sexual exploitation remains prevalent, women constitute the majority of human trafficking victims in Estonia. Based on the registered crime reports, the same perpetrators are responsible for several incidents of prostitution involving trafficking (along with crimes committed against minors). For example, pimping crimes were taking place in some Tallinn apartments, erotic massage parlours or hotels. In many cases, the victims of sexual exploitation came from abroad, e.g., from Ukraine, Russia and other countries.

³⁵ Riigi Teataja, "Code of Criminal Procedure," 2013, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530102013093/consolide>

The exploitation of minors occurred in a variety of online environments, including Facebook Messenger, Skype, Viber, and others; perpetrators used multiple user accounts and names.³⁵ Traffickers later met minors in various settings, including public places (like hotels), cars, homes, strip clubs, the child's place of employment, and shared residences. Minors were enticed by the prospect of financial gain to pose in sensual and pornographic positions in front of a web camera, frequently while masturbating. Further, perpetrators frequently subjected minors to sexual exploitation by coercing them to perform acts of prostitution. Victims reported being offered anything from 5 to 50 EUR for each interaction, and in some cases, up to 500 EUR on a monthly basis.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN ESTONIA

Human trafficking prevention and anti-trafficking policies in Estonia have widespread support and are well-coordinated across sectors. The topic prioritisation is also well reflected in the specific high-level strategic documents. According to the Estonian Criminal Policy Guidelines, the Estonian criminal justice system is efficient, fast, independent, people-oriented, and victim-friendly.³⁶ The emphasis is placed on preventing the most dangerous crimes, including human trafficking. The government's anti-crime priorities, renewed in 2021, emphasise the need to combat organised crime, including human trafficking.³⁷ The document details governmental agencies, lines of activity, and connected parties responsible for combatting the issues. Moreover, the 2021-2025 Violence Prevention Agreement emphasises awareness-raising as a crucial prevention mechanism against human trafficking.³⁸ The agreement indicates that in order to meet international compliance standards, prevention and surveillance procedures and laws must be revised if applicable.

Estonian authorities systematically develop multi-level information exchange, coordinating and cooperating with all related stakeholders, including NGOs and victim support. Related practitioners (police, prosecutors, victim support, IOM, NGOs, ministries, and others) are members of a shared network administered by the Ministry of Justice within the scope of the trafficking in human beings roundtable. Unfortunately, Mittetulundusühing Eluliin is the only non-profit organisation that directly specialises in anti-human trafficking work within the roundtable. The regular workflow includes exchanging information on existing projects, discussing objectives and common goals, and impact assessments examining the legal framework. Estonian practitioners frequently participate in international forums (UN, OSCE, CoE, EU) that address human trafficking to improve prevention strategies.

³⁶ Riigi Teataja, "Kriminaalpoliitika põhialuste aastani 2030 heakskiitmine," 2020, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/313112020006>

³⁷ "Ministrid panid paika uued kuritegevuse vastase võitluse prioriteedid," Justiitsministeeriumi avalike suhete talitus, 2021, <https://www.just.ee/uudised/ministrid-panid-paika-ued-kuritegevuse-vastase-voitluse-prioriteedid>

³⁸ Vägivallaennetuse kokkulepe 2021-2025," 2021, <https://www.just.ee/kuritegevus-ja-selle-ennetus/vagivallaennetuse-kokkulepe>

One good example is the project “Social program SPSV” (Norway Grants Program 2021-2022) of the Mittetulundusühing Eluliin, a social programme created to reduce the demand³⁵ for trafficking in human beings, prevent and combat trafficking, and reduce the market for prostitution in Estonia. As part of the initiative, Mittetulundusühing Eluliin has conducted a survey and launched a pilot program aimed at changing the attitudes and behaviours of sex buyers.

In 2019, guidelines on the identification of victims of trafficking in human beings were rewritten in collaboration with all the relevant counterparts. These guidelines include a more detailed description of the roles and responsibilities of different actors in the identification and referral processes. The version of the document with restricted access to the general public contains all relevant contacts in each organisation responsible for identifying and referring victims of human trafficking. Notably, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) has yet to be established in Estonia. However, the identification procedures have been described in the guidelines, and regular training take place to enforce practical cooperation.

The Social Insurance Board coordinates victim services in Estonia: 1) offers secure housing (24/7) with food and helps to meet immediate material needs; 2) provides counselling services, including social counselling, psychological therapy, and legal counselling (including court representation); 3) offers personal support services. Additionally, vocational training and entry into the Estonian labour market are provided in partnership with the Unemployment Fund as an integral aspect of the counselling service.

THE MOST SUITABLE WAYS TO PROVIDE MENTAL SUPPORT TO VICTIMS IN ESTONIA

The most commonly used treatment for human trafficking victims is narrative exposure therapy (NET), which is designed to address trauma-spectrum disorders in survivors of severe and complex trauma.³⁹ Notably, the experience of traumatic events and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have dose-response relationships. Hence, when a person has gone through several traumas, their 'fear networks' become widened and interconnected, allowing them to be activated by triggers from any traumatic situations they have been through. Mittetulundusühing Eluliin uses NET treatment methods to treat PTSD in women and girls who have been trafficked. The treatment is offered to both Estonian citizens and third-country nationals, which can take place with the help of an interpreter. Narrative exposure therapy (NET) Therapy consists of the following parts:

Part 1: Diagnostic interview and psychoeducation. During this stage, the therapist may assess the client's suitability for NET, offer a model of how the brain works, establish fear networks, develop a therapy plan (lifeline, narration, testimony), explain the risks/dangers of avoiding traumatic memories, and allow the client to grant informed consent.

Part 2: Laying out the lifeline. It consists of arranging traumas and events on a line to create a visual 'overview' of the client's life. The placement of the lifeline is very personalised; it necessitates solid theoretical knowledge of the nature and individuality of the trauma memory, as well as close therapist monitoring.

Part 3: NET therapy sessions – Narrative Exposure to flowers & stones. The therapist later sets the stage and investigates the event's background by recalling relevant information, such as the time of year, the weather, or other noteworthy details, through various leading questions and prompts. When a stone is reached, the therapist's job is to slow the sessions down and provide context for what happened the day before the occurrence.

Part 4: Final session rituals. The therapist helps with re-reading the narrative by promoting engagement in exposure to trauma material while re-reading instead of avoiding the subject and the subsequent trauma. During the final therapy stages, the therapist helps a client to lay out the final lifeline, including all the positive, negative, sad, and violent events (flowers, stones, candles, sticks), and finally, placing flowers for hopes and wishes for the future.

Victim's story

My mental health requires professional attention and psychotherapy after all I have been through as a sex slave for financial gain. Now I am going to consultations with a psychotherapist and a psychiatrist. Such psychological damage, the doctor warns, will not fade away quickly. I hope that future psychotherapy and treatment will help me rehabilitate.

CONCLUSIONS

With this research, the partner organisations aimed to present a comprehensive overview of human trafficking in the Baltic States, including its definitions, common types, and the countries' roles in fighting the trafficking industry.

It is evident that human trafficking affects people of all ages, genders, and walks of life, which was highlighted by the recent statistics from partner countries. The common types of human trafficking in Lithuania include forced criminal exploitation, forced labour, and sexual exploitation. In Latvia, the primary kind of trafficking is labour exploitation, while in Estonia, it is sexual and labour exploitation. In terms of gender, the data suggests that in Lithuania, the number of men and women affected by trafficking fluctuates each year. In Latvia, the majority of victims are men due to the prevalence of labour exploitation. In Estonia, the majority of victims are women or young children. When it comes to the country of origin of victims, the data shows that in Lithuania, Lithuanian citizens account for 85-100% of all victims, with a disproportionate number of Lithuanian youth being affected. In Latvia, victims are predominantly Latvian citizens, although, in 2019 and 2020, there was a higher number of third-country nationals who were victims of labour exploitation. In Estonia, the majority of victims are third-country nationals.

The research also highlights the efforts made by NGOs and governmental agencies in each of these countries to combat and prevent human trafficking, as well as the best practices they have employed to provide support to victims. It is important to note, that the possibility of an increase in human trafficking cases in the region remains a concern, particularly with the influx of war refugees in 2022. Therefore, continued collaboration and knowledge sharing between organisations and agencies will be crucial in the fight against human trafficking in the Baltic Sea region.

Overall, the research emphasised the need for collective action from various stakeholders, including governments, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organisations, to combat and prevent human trafficking. This includes implementing effective laws and policies, increasing awareness, and providing complex assistance to victims and survivors. With the outline of the current situation across the Baltic States, the partners sought to establish a base framework for further collaboration and sharing of good practices in the fight against human trafficking.

ABOUT THE PROJECT PARTNERS



Active Youth

Active Youth (AY) is a Lithuania-based for-purpose organisation that unites young leaders, thinkers and doers, those who seek change and those who make change. AY's mission is to create opportunities for youth and sustainable positive impact in the way we treat our planet, health, vulnerable people & online community. Active Youth is striving to be at the forefront of organisations creating an inclusive & sustainable life for communities globally. AY Human Division, responsible for implementing the They Have a Name project, aims to educate people on stereotypes, human rights, and social issues while advocating for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.



Society "Shelter "Safe House""

Society "Shelter "Safe House"" was established on August 6, 2007, with the aim to develop support services for victims of human trafficking, legal immigrants, including asylum seekers, refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection status by ensuring the individual's right to receive adequate assistance and protection; promoting rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of human trafficking into the society; creating interactive forms of training, and expanding cooperation with state and local government institutions. Society "Shelter "Safe House"" raises awareness of the social field in general society and mass media, actively partnering with other NGOs, the State and local governments.



Mittetulundusühing Eluliin

Mittetulundusühing Eluliin is the only non-profit organisation in Estonia dealing with the issues of trafficking in human beings comprehensively since the year 2005. Eluliin is providing trainings, public awareness activities, and events, preparing guidelines, and training materials, doing outreach work, scientific studies, media campaigns, providing therapy and services for victims of trafficking in human beings, and participating as a partner in international and internal projects and co-operation. Special attention is paid to the vulnerable victims of trafficking (children, women, people with disabilities and special needs). Mittetulundusühing Eluliin is a member of the EU Civil Society Platform against trafficking in human beings.

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