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GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
National Committee for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons
COUNTRY REPORT ON SUPPRESSION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
September, 2002

§ Government coordination

At the end of March 2002, Government of the Republic of Croatia formed National Committee for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons as a central governmental body responsible for coordination of all the activities regarding the fight against trafficking in persons. Members of the National Committee are representatives of all relevant ministries as well as the representatives of the NGO-s, international organizations and the media. The Secretariat of the Committee was set up in the Government Office for Human Rights which carries out all administrative work and which is responsible for co-coordinating a response and serving as a liaison for international contacts. Mrs. Željka Antunović, Vice president of the Croatian Government was appointed as a President of the National Committee and Mr. Darko Gottlicher, Head of the Government Office for Human Rights was appointed Governmental Anti-trafficking Coordinator.

The Government Office for Human Rights also initiated the foundation of commissions for the suppression of trafficking in persons on the level of local government. The purpose of that is to create the system of bodies on all levels of society capable to combat these negative phenomena.

§ Cooperation with NGO-s and international organizations

Co-operation with non-governmental organizations is established through intercession of their representatives in the National Committee who are responsible for the coordination among the other NGO-s that are dealing with the issue of suppression of trafficking in persons.

Very good collaboration is developed between the National Committee and the International Organization for Migration, and that is confirmed in the Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation signed in June 2002 between the Chief of Mission of the IOM in Croatia and the Head of the Government Office for Human Rights.

Crucial roll of both, NGO-s and IO-s is in the area of protection and assistance for trafficking victims but they are also important partners in all other fields e.g. prevention, education, international collaboration.

§ National Plan of Action

One of the first tasks of the National Committee was drafting of The National Plan of Action, and such a Plan is now in the legislative procedure and we expect it to be adopted until the end of October. In preparation of the National Plan of Action we tried to cover all fields of work so we divided it in 6 main categories: legislation, prevention, protection and assistance for trafficking victims, education, international collaboration and coordination of activities. Within each of these categories there is whole scope of measures specified by the responsible organization, possible partners and a precise time frame in which specific activity has to be finished.

§ Bilateral and multilateral agreements and activities

In December 2000 Croatia signed The UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementing protocols. The procedure for the ratification of these documents has already started and we expect it soon to be finished.

Anti-trafficking Declaration of South Eastern Europe was also signed at that Conference and one of the instruments, whose development is foreseen by the Palermo Declaration, is the Statement on Commitments, which was adopted at the 2nd Regional Ministerial Forum of the States of South Eastern Europe held in November 2001 in Zagreb. This Statement binds the states of South Eastern Europe to build and take part in the Information Exchange Mechanism Concerning Trafficking in Human Beings in South Eastern Europe.

In May 1999, in Bucharest, the Republic of Croatia signed the Agreement on Combating Trans-border Crime of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) and the Croatian Parliament ratified it in August 2000.

The Republic of Croatia is also included in the activities of the Stability Pact's Task force on trafficking in human beings.

In May 2001 Ministries of Interior of The Republic of Croatia, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and FRY made an agreement regarding police cooperation in suppression of illegal migrations and organized crime which significantly improved the control of state's border.

§ Legal framework

One of the activities planed for the first phase of implementation of the National Plan of Action is the legislation review and the harmonization of the Croatian laws with the international agreements that are legally binding in Croatia.

According to Croatian Penal Code trafficking is established as serious crime and is implemented into 3 articles:

175: Establishment of Slavery and Transport of Slaves

177: Illegal Transfer of Persons Across the State Border

178: International prostitution

The review of that Penal Code is on its way now and the National Committee has initiated the special review regarding the prosecution and enforcement against traffickers. Special working group was also established for drafting of the Law on witness protection.

In near future, probably in October, a new draft of the Law on Foreigners will be finalized and presented in the Parliament. National Committee called for Working group to include regulation of temporary residence permit for the victims of trafficking in this new law.

It is also important to mention that suppression of trafficking in persons is included in the National Defense Strategy adopted in the Parliament in the spring of 2002. as well as that the Government Commission for Gender Equality has included counter trafficking activities in its National Plan of Action

§ Research/media coverage

Parallel to the development of the National Plan of Action, IOM Zagreb, in partnership with national NGO-s, conducted field research in order to determine the pattern, scale and dimension of trafficking in Croatia. The research was published in June 2002 and it provides insight on the magnitude of this phenomenon, transit details, living and working conditions of trafficked victims, traffickers and the mechanisms of their trade and the public perception of trafficking in persons.

The public opinion survey in Croatia has shown that Croatian citizens are generally well informed about possible cases of trafficking in persons. Newspapers and magazines, TV, as well as friends and acquaintances were stated as the main sources of knowledge about trafficking. Although, until recently, this phenomenon has not been extensively covered in the media, it has always attracted public attention. However, during the last few months media

has showed much more interest for this topic, and each day there is more and more articles and reportages about the cases and the problem of trafficking in general.

§ Awareness raising

As a key preventive measure of trafficking to, through and from the territory of Croatia, National Committee in collaboration with IOM and national NGO-s is planning to launch a large-scale public awareness campaign.

For a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings, the awareness-raising campaign will disseminate relevant information on the realities and risks of trafficking, and more specifically the risks for young girls to be entrapped by traffickers.

In order to ensure effective campaign targeting within the general population as well as on a geographical basis, the campaign will be carefully prepared through preliminary research. Relevant data will be regularly gathered from Croatian authorities (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare). In addition, two nation-wide omnibus surveys will be conducted on a representative sample of adult population in order to estimate the extent of public awareness of trafficking in persons in the Republic of Croatia during and at the end of the public awareness campaign.

The campaign will use the following resources to disseminate pertinent TIP information:

Basic fact brochures which will include hard facts about the realities of trafficking and its consequences in terms of exploitation, abuse, isolation, hardship and health. It will also provide information on the most current recruitment methods used by traffickers but also information on assistance to victims of trafficking. Distribution will be organized through a national network of government and non-government agencies, national employment agencies, youth centers, discos, etc. Through co-operation with the Ministry of Interior additional brochures will be distributed to young people who are for the first time applying for passport issuing.

Posters, leaflets, stickers, sugar-bags with a high-impact message will be produced and distributed particularly in highly visible places such as border crossing points, public transportation systems, and employment agencies. Such materials will also provide contact details for those wishing to obtain further information and/or assistance on trafficking.

TV and radio spots will be produced and aired on national television and radio stations. As this part of the campaign has the potential to be the most widespread, visible and effective, it is essential that trafficking in persons is treated in light of its human rights underpinnings, but also as a concern that all societies with democratic principles should share.

Public forums, debates and press conferences on activities linked to trafficking in persons will be held on a regular basis in order to trigger greater public attention. Press conferences and meetings with journalists will allow for timely and in-depth briefings on the progress of project activities; they will also help establish regular and good contacts with journalists, and allow to improve the understanding of the problem and the way it is presented in the media.

The SOS Line will be set up in partnership with a Croatian NGO – Center for Women Rosa. The Line contact number will be disseminated through the above-mentioned brochures, sugar packets, stickers, etc, and will provide anonymous counseling and/or information on social and legal services for trafficked victims as well as any other general trafficking in persons information. IOM will closely co-operate with the Center for Women Rosa and will gather, compile and enter information into a database that will be integrated into the IOM regional database already established and functioning in Pristina through SIDA funding.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education some activities will take place as a part of a regular school program.

§ Training of relevant state authorities

Prevention of trafficking in human beings can never be fully effective without the dissemination of information. The main aim of this training is to make all partners aware of the existence and dynamics that regulate trafficking in human beings, as well as of the impact that trafficking may have in their respective fields of activity. Training of police staff (Departments of Border Police and for Foreigners) will be an utmost priority, as they are often the first to come into contact with trafficked victims and need to be able to properly screen them from 'economic' or so-called illegal migrants. Social workers as well as those working in the judiciary and the medical field who often enter into dialogue with apprehended migrants in the course of their processing will also be trained.

In October 2001, IOM-London and the University of North London delivered a one-week 'training for trainers' course on counter-trafficking entitled 'Developing Minimum Standards for Professionals in the Balkans responding to the Trafficking of Women and Girls for the purposes of Sexual Exploitation'. Participants at the training were representatives from the Ministry of Interior (Border Police, Organized Crime Department, Department for Illegal

Migration, Police Academy), Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Ministry of Justice, national and international non-government organizations and international intergovernmental organizations.

The problem of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is very complex and to be successfully suppressed it is necessary that many activities take place at all levels - in all states and local government bodies, institutions of the civil sector, especially non-governmental organizations and international organizations. Croatian Government expresses strong political will to deal with the issue of trafficking and views trafficking in persons as a global problem that must be addressed through country-specific anti-trafficking initiatives as well as by regional cooperation.