



**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

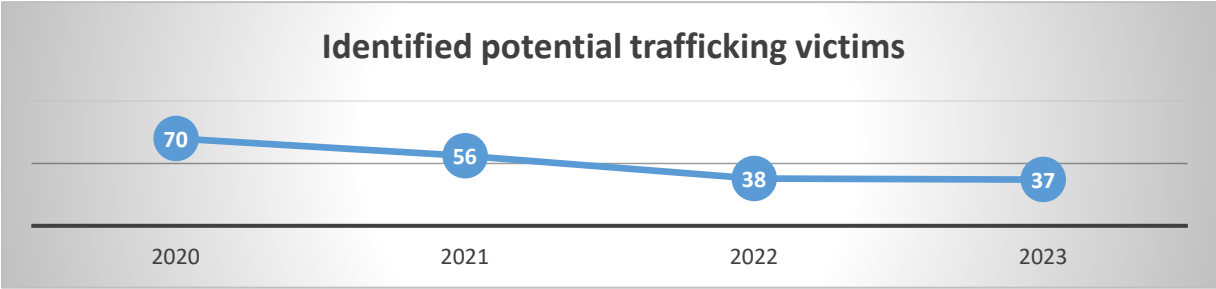
**STRATEGY FOR COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA**

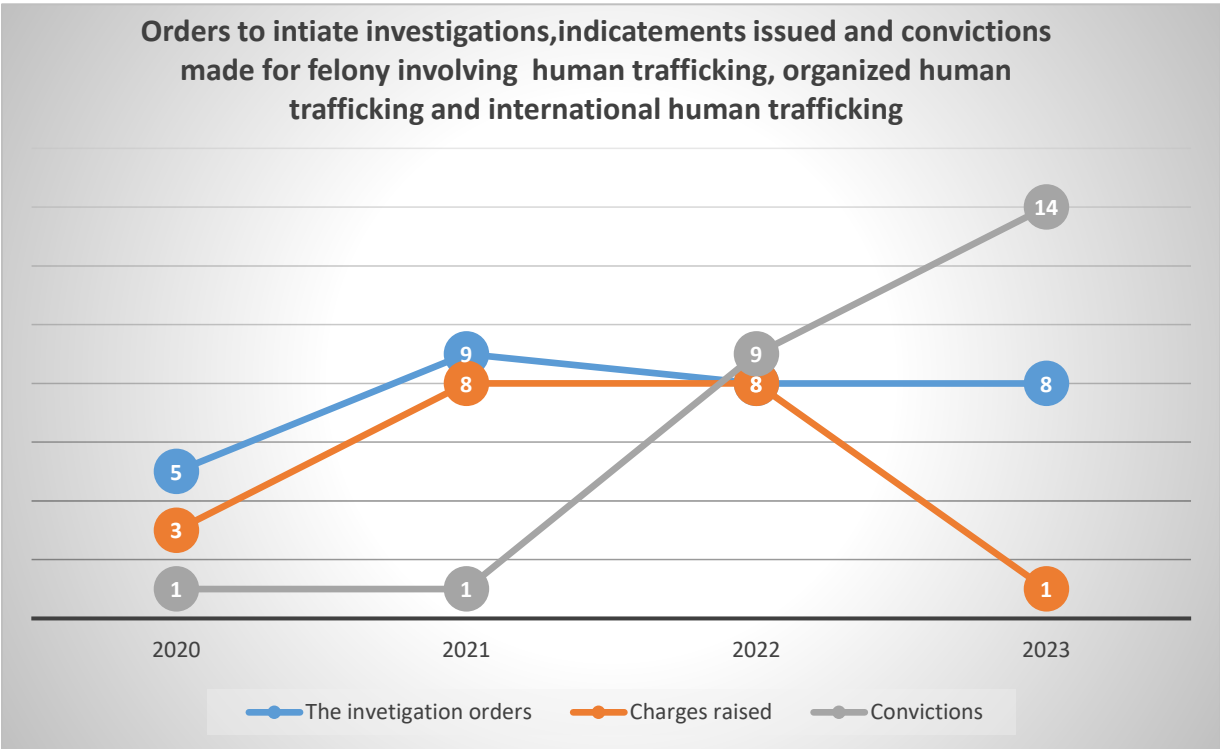
2024 - 2027

INTRODUCTION

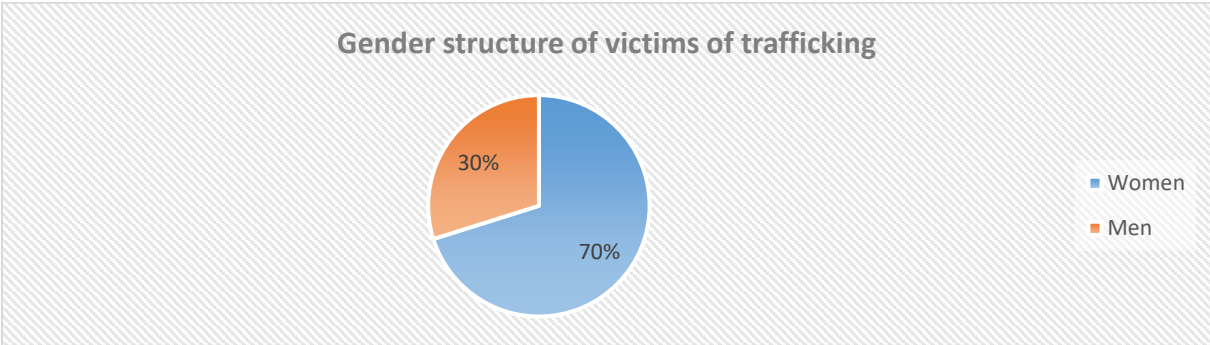
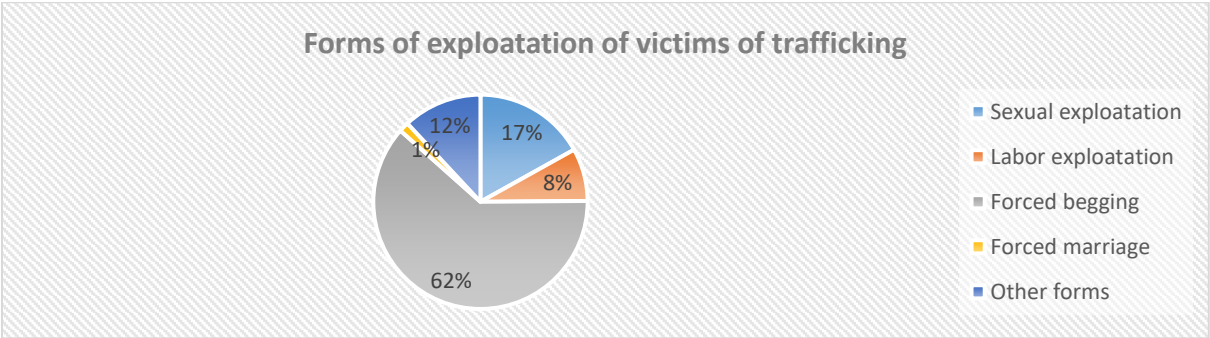
Human trafficking is a serious and complex felony that predominantly affects women and children, often involving organized and cross-border criminal elements. It yields significant illegal profits, inflicts suffering on victims, and imposes considerable costs on society. Despite a progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina's response to human trafficking accomplished in previous years, every vulnerable person remains at significant risk of becoming a victim. Human trafficking is also a severe violation of human rights, as guaranteed by international law, the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, entity constitutions, and the Statute of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This crime threatens social cohesion, the rule of law, and sustainable development, impacting society’s social, health, educational, and cultural spheres.

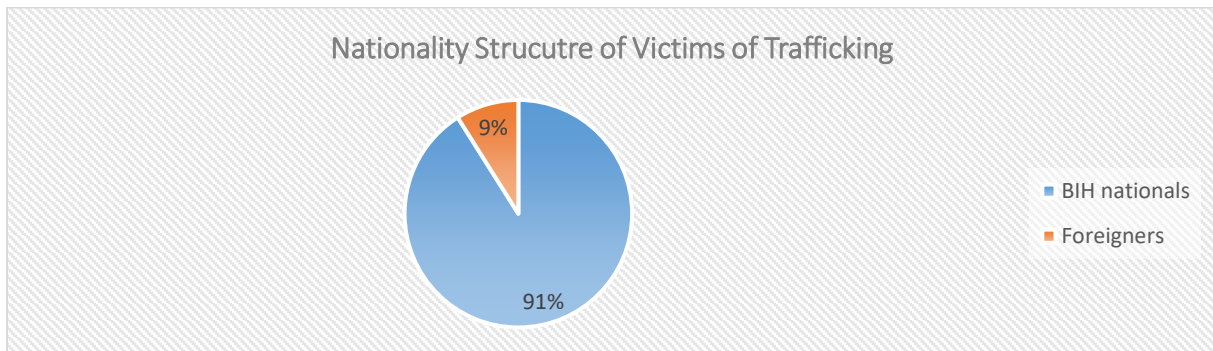
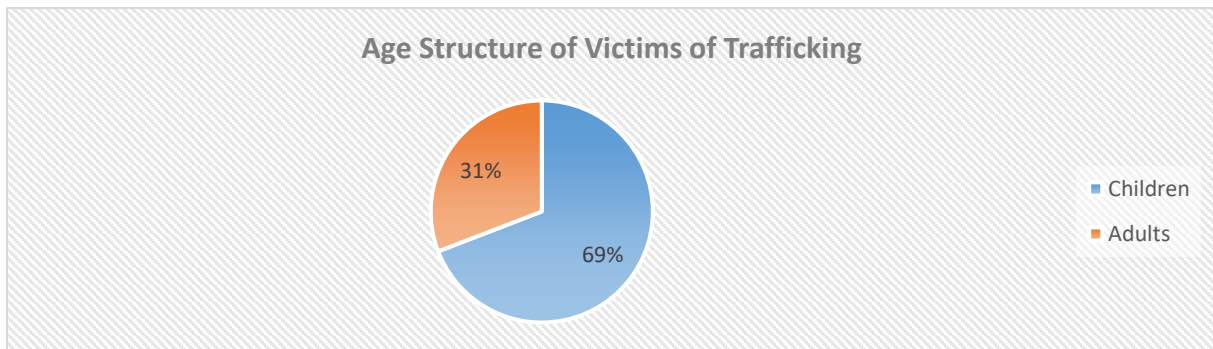
Bosnia and Herzegovina serves as a country of origin, transit, and destination for human trafficking aimed at forced begging, criminal activities, prostitution, and other forms of sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, domestic servitude, and forced marriages. Traffickers exploit both local and foreign victims within Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Bosnian victims are trafficked and exploited abroad. During the prior Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking (2020–2023), trends indicated a reduction in identified potential trafficking victims but at the same time a rise in investigation orders, indictments, and convictions. Statistics on are presented in the following charts.





The most common forms of exploitation of human trafficking victims during this period were forced begging and sexual exploitation, primarily affecting women and children, citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Statistical data on the forms of exploitation, gender, age structure, and nationality of trafficking victims are presented in the following charts





Given that above statistics show that human trafficking yet persists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, all levels of government must define their anti trafficking proactive policies for the next four-year period. These policies will aim to strengthen the legal and institutional framework and coordination mechanisms to prevent human trafficking, prosecute perpetrators, protect and assist victims, reduce the demand for services provided by trafficking victims, and enhance bilateral and multilateral international cooperation.

To facilitate implementation of this strategy and achieve its general and specific goals, priorities, and strategic measures, action plans at all government levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina will focus on the following forms of human trafficking exploitation: prostitution and other sexual exploitation, labor exploitation and servitude, digital sexual exploitation and pornography, forced begging, forced criminal activity, forced marriages, as well as all forms of exploitation present within mixed migration flows across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In addition to meeting the general and special strategic anti-trafficking goals and through implementing the policies defined in this strategy, Bosnia and Herzegovina will advance its commitments arising from international documents, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its accompanying Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Additionally, the country shall aim to fulfill recommendations from relevant Council of Europe, European Union, OSCE, and U.S. State Department reports.

In particular, by virtue of implementing the policies outlined in this strategy, authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina will also continue fulfilling recommendations from the Council of Europe Group of Experts' 2022 Third Evaluation Round Report, the European Commission's "Analytical Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina's Application for EU Membership" (2019), and the "EU Commission Expert Assessment Mission Report on the Fight against Human Trafficking" conducted in 2018. Accordingly, the authorities will make a progress with

regard to meeting their obligations under EU Directive 2011/36/EU (of the EU Parliament and Council) on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims adopted on April 5, 2011. The implementation of policies defined under the Strategy will also entail enforcing recommendations specified under the report evaluating progress of prior strategy.

The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, alongside relevant institutions throughout BIH in accordance with their jurisdictions, reaffirm its commitment to upholding obligations under domestic and international law with this strategy. They adopt policies to safeguard vulnerable individuals from human trafficking, empower victims, prosecute perpetrators, and protect fundamental social values, paying special attention to the most vulnerable groups: women, children, and minorities.

The strategic measures outlined in this strategy will be implemented over the period from 2024 to 2027, with general and specific strategic goals set to be achieved by the end of the strategy's implementation period. The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be prepared to respond swiftly to new developments or trends, continually monitoring and analyzing the state of human trafficking and its evolution within and beyond Bosnia and Herzegovina, making any necessary amendments or additions to the strategy, while adhering to the guiding principles set forth in the strategy.

The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with relevant institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, will work diligently within their mandates to ensure the timely and effective implementation of this strategy. Given the need for all government levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina to work against human trafficking, the Council of Ministers will recommend that the governments of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, cantons, and the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt action plans for implementing the strategy. The Council of Ministers will closely cooperate with these governments, as well as with international organizations and non-governmental organizations, to maximize the impact of the measures provided for in this strategy.

The Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina will ensure the coordination of institutions from Bosnia and Herzegovina, entities, cantons, and the Brčko District, as well as international and non-governmental organizations, in implementing this strategy, and it will provide annual reports to the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the status of human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the implementation of this strategy.

I GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY

An effective and coordinated response to combat trafficking from all counterparts and levels of government, as well as civil society, requires agreed principles to guide these activities and ensure that the actions of relevant institutions and civil society are based on high standards. In implementing the strategy, authorities and civil society will adhere to the following principles:

Respect for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms: All activities of government institutions and civil society organizations will be based on the fact that the human rights and dignity of human trafficking victims are of utmost importance and they must be respected. Every victim must receive all necessary assistance and protection. Ensuring all rights guaranteed by international and domestic legal provisions for trafficking victims is crucial,

including protection, assistance, and support, irrespective of whether formal legal criminal proceedings are initiated with participation of victim in accomplishing his/her rights.

Participation and Accountability of Government: The state's obligation to protect the rights and freedoms of its citizens entails responsibility for creating conditions where every person on its territory is safe from violence. Authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are tasked with establishing an organized, efficient, and sustainable system to combat human trafficking but at the same time to protect and assist the victims.

Interdisciplinary and Multisector Approach: Human trafficking is a complex problem requiring a coordinated, interdisciplinary, and multisector approach. This approach focuses on prevention, protection of witnesses and victims, criminal prosecution of traffickers and users of victims' services, strengthening international cooperation, and fostering partnerships among all actors. Only coordinated activities and progress across all these fields can yield tangible results in combating human trafficking.

Non-Discrimination: The causes and triggers of human trafficking are often associated with discrimination based on various grounds, especially against minority and vulnerable social groups. They may also be associated with restrictive migration policy, gender based discrimination and prejudice for rendering sexual services. Anti-trafficking activities must be rooted in prohibiting discriminatory practices.

Involvement of the Broader Community: The complexity of combating human trafficking demands the inclusion of the wider community, particularly civil society organizations and the business sector, in order to ensure achievements in countering this phenomenon. Thus, it is essential to adopt an approach that enables leveraging civil society resources and developing mechanisms for cooperation and coordination of activities.

Sustainability: Realistic resource planning is the fundamental model for ensuring the sustainability of anticipated activities in combating human trafficking. Additionally, in planning and implementing strategic activities, reliance on available resources, funding sources, and coordinated support is essential.

International and Regional Cooperation: As human trafficking has often cross-border character, effective cooperation mechanisms at the regional and international levels are needed for prevention, prosecution of perpetrators, and protection and assistance for victims.

Protection and Respect for Children's Rights: All actions taken concerning child victims and children at risk of trafficking will be based on international standards for human rights protection, especially the principles of protecting and respecting children's rights as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. Child victims have the right to special protective measures, regardless of their legal status as victims or witnesses, in line with their specific rights and needs. In dealing with children at risk and child victims, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration.

Gender-Sensitive Approach: The specificities of human trafficking reflect gender: the trafficking of women and men differs, including the forms of victim exploitation, and recruitment methods. Therefore, support measures for victims should be gender-sensitive,

taking into account the differing needs of male and female victims. Integrating a gender-sensitive approach in the strategy and action plans is essential.

II STRATEGIC GOALS AND MEASURES

GENERAL GOAL

Ensure a continuous, comprehensive, and sustainable social response to human trafficking through a strengthened legal and institutional framework and coordination mechanisms. This response will focus on combating human trafficking, prevention, prosecution of perpetrators, victims' protection and assistance, reducing the demand for services provided by trafficking victims, and fostering international cooperation on both bilateral and multilateral levels.

SPECIFIC GOAL 1 – Political, Legal, and Institutional Framework and Coordination Mechanisms

Enhance the political, legal, and institutional framework and strengthen functional and sustainable coordination mechanisms to combat human trafficking through prevention, criminal prosecution, and victim's protection and assistance. In this regard, key strategic measures include:

1.1 Adoption of Action Plans for Strategy Implementation

1. Adopt action plans for Strategy implementation, as operative policy documents, based on the objectives and measures outlined in this strategy, detailing activities, timelines, responsible institutions, implementation indicators, and necessary resources.

2. The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina will adopt the action plans for institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while entity governments, cantons, and the Brčko District will adopt the appropriate plans within their jurisdictions.

3. When developing these action plans, transparency and participation of key stakeholders and others: civil society, business community, citizens, representatives of victims and minorities including Roma will be prioritized. In this process, open coordination methods (intensive two-way direction horizontal and vertical coordination) will be fostered in order to ensure cohesion of the Strategy and its action plans as well as effective strategy implementation.

4. The indicators to monitor the implementation of action plans shall be made in line with the Strategy, however it will be possible to introduce new indicators adjusted for certain level of governance. In this way, stronger sustainability of results will be accomplished thanks to placing a focus to systemic and institutional solutions.

5. During the process of action plans development, the adjustment with other relevant strategies and action plans will be made to improve efficiency of strategic milestones targeting groups at-risk. Accordingly, these documents include Roma action plan; action plan to suppress family violence; as well as other documents addressing subjects of social

inclusion, education, health, employment and human rights which could lead to improving socio economic position of Roma and other vulnerable social groups.

1.2 Continuous Monitoring of Strategy and Action Plan Implementation

1. Efficient implementation of the Strategy will be supported through regular monitoring by a Monitoring Team, appointed by the Council of Ministers, and relevant government bodies at the entity, cantonal, and Brčko District levels.
2. In cooperation with the Monitoring Team, the Ministry of Security will compile, consolidate, and analyze data on trafficking victims and related trafficking crimes, ensuring confidentiality and sensitive data protection.
3. The Monitoring Team shall compile annual reports to be submitted by the Ministry of Security to the Council of Ministers. These reports shall detail the state of human trafficking and the strategy's implementation.
4. The Monitoring team may propose additions and amendment of the Strategy if needed, whereas all Strategy's activities are to be implemented in line with accepted international legal and professional standards.

1.3 Strengthening and Advance Coordination Mechanisms for Anti-Trafficking Operations

Strengthen and advance coordination mechanisms of anti-trafficking operations, including coordination teams at all levels of government tasked with:

- Launching and advocating human trafficking as a governmental political priority,
- Strengthening cooperation and coordination among institutions and organizations within the coordination teams at all levels of government,
- Ensuring a multidisciplinary approach within coordination teams with involvement from law enforcement and authorities in charge of borders/ foreigners, social welfare, health/ mental health, education, as well as free legal aid providers,
- Involving non- governmental organizations which deter trafficking, provide assistance and other services to victims and daily centers for street children/children at risk within coordination teams. These activities shall boost determent efforts and ensure appropriate protection and assistance to victims.
- Strengthen cooperation between various coordination teams as well as with specialized non-governmental organizations in order to have a coherent approach in identifying victims and their access to assistance provided by various department throughout the country
- Establish a network of specialized prosecutors and investigators in charge of human trafficking and promote specialist anti trafficking skills of police, foreign inspectors, prosecutors and judges dealing with trafficking cases. Advance the actions of Pressing Anti-Trafficking and Illegal Migration task force.

-Ensure that members of coordination and regional monitoring teams receive appropriate and steady training on trafficking and other related topics, especially in the areas not prone to trafficking before.

-Create preconditions for efficient work of coordination teams, including administrative and logistical support and allocation of funds.

1.4. Conduct Research on Human Trafficking

1. Research on the phenomenon of human trafficking will be conducted to improve understanding of its current status and trends, and to identify and address deficiencies in the legal and institutional framework, and accordingly develop appropriate policies and measures in human trafficking overall, especially in relation to forms of trafficking and the use of information and telecommunications technologies in trafficking.

2. Pay particular attention to applied research, whose results will be used to plan and undertake those activities needed to resolve pragmatically key issues identified in the research. Some examples include developing coordinated policies, amendments to laws, regulations, and guidelines for more effective anti-trafficking efforts, and appropriate application of existing laws, regulations, and guidelines.

3. Conduct research which will fully consider the functioning of anti- trafficking coordination mechanism and referral mechanisms for victims to foster their reintegration, examining the legal, regulatory, and institutional setup of the system. This review will encompass the aspect of horizontal and vertical synchronization and coordination of institutions and other bodies within the system, in order to detect problems present in system functioning as a whole and of each individual stakeholder within the system.

1.5. Ensure Financing for the Strategy and Action Plans

1. Further development of a sustainable system will be encouraged, in which the budgets of Bosnia and Herzegovina, entities, Brčko District, cantons, cities, and municipalities will provide financial support for implementing the Strategy, action plans, and continuous anti-trafficking activities, including victim compensation. International donors will be encouraged to contribute to the strategy and action plan financing as well.

2. Initiate to allocated funds in the respective budgets at all levels of government to fund anti-trafficking action plan implementation and remuneration for coordination teams' members.

3. Continue to provide funding for victims shelters operated by non-governmental and other organizations, which assist victims in reintegration programs after leaving shelters.

1.6. Align Criminal Legislation with Council of Europe and EU Recommendations

Align relevant criminal laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina with Council of Europe conventions on human trafficking, recommendations from the Council of Europe and the European Union, particularly by:

- Signing and ratifying the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs and aligning criminal laws with its provisions;

- Adopting amendments in criminal legislation to explicitly designate "forced begging" as a form of exploitation;
- Adopting amendments in criminal legislation to standardize minimum penalties for the basic human trafficking offense in harmony with EU Directive 36/2011/EU;
- Amending criminal laws to ensure that all forms of sexual and labor exploitation, as well as servitude, are criminalized;
- Amending legislation to clarify that parents can be held criminally liable for trafficking offenses, especially in cases of forced child marriages, arranged marriages, or when children are used for begging. This would include improvements of legal definitions of human trafficking whereas a situation of having a pattern/guardian liable criminally for child trafficking, and an ability that would permit taking over of prosecution of trafficking crimes by victims themselves;
- Aligning criminal law provisions with the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic violence. This includes harmonizing the definition of "child" with the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation
- Define clearly the term "child" in criminal legislation in order to enforce the regulations appropriately and thus safeguard minors from.

1.7. Improve and Align Regulations Governing Related Areas Comprising the Anti-Trafficking System (Prevention, Victim Safeguarding, Compensation, Social Protection, Education, Healthcare, Employment, etc.)

1. Improve legislation in related areas that comprise the anti-trafficking system (prevention, victim safeguard, compensation, social protection, education, healthcare, employment, etc.) to clearly address the needs of trafficking victims.
2. Build a sustainable protection and support system for victims by enhancing social protection laws to recognize trafficking victims as eligible for social measures and services.
3. Adopt regulations in line with international standards to establish shelters, including their roles, criteria for accreditation and legal recognition by the institutions in charge, scope of work, victims' rights within shelters, rights and obligations of shelter staff, mechanisms for funding, transparent fund distribution, safety conditions, psychological support, medical care, access to justice, legal services, education, and more.
4. Develop a register of shelters and book of rules on register including its content and method of recording
5. Legally define business operations in supply chain scheme in order to deter labor exploitation.

SPECIFIC GOAL 2 – PREVENTION

Build a proper understanding and awareness among citizens and professionals about human trafficking, its forms, causes, risks, and ways to respond in cases of identifying risk situations and vulnerabilities of individuals and groups.

Develop mechanisms to prevent and limit the occurrence and persistence of human trafficking, which will encourage appropriate reactions by formal social control bodies in creating an environment that strengthens socially acceptable forms of behavior and develops sustainable early warning systems for human trafficking cases.

2.1. Conduct Public Awareness Campaigns

1. Develop and implement targeted campaigns to raise awareness among citizens about human trafficking, its forms, causes, risks, and ways to respond in cases of identifying risk situations and vulnerabilities of individuals and groups, including:

-Conducting comprehensive awareness-raising campaigns on human trafficking for the general public and among various target groups, including children, parents, teachers, educators, social workers, government institutions, civil society, and the broader public, as well as specific campaigns targeting the most vulnerable groups. These will be based on research on the state and trends in human trafficking and evaluations of the results of previous preventive activities.

-Conducting awareness campaigns about forced begging as a form of human trafficking.

-Implementing measures to prevent human trafficking by spreading information and raising awareness about trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation.

-Raising awareness about human trafficking through the misuse of information and telecommunications technologies and

-Raising public awareness about the phenomenon of human trafficking concerning potential exploitation faced by migrants passing through the region.

2. Conduct evaluations on the achievement, outcomes, and impact of interventions within activities to raise awareness about human trafficking.
3. Conduct awareness campaigns among citizens and professionals from various sectors on the harm of begging, forced and underage marriages, emphasizing that these behaviors are not cultural phenomena within the Roma community but criminal acts defined by criminal law.
4. Conduct awareness-raising activities within Roma communities, highlighting that certain behaviors (begging, forced, and underage marriages) constitute criminal acts rather than traditional behaviors, involving local and regional Roma leaders.
5. Strengthen prevention through social, economic, and other measures for at-risk groups, including fieldwork in Roma and other at-risk communities, promoting gender equality, combating gender-based violence, and empowering women.
6. Raise awareness among employers and promote micro-businesses, social enterprises, public-private partnerships, and state-supported employment programs to create suitable job opportunities for trafficking victims. Strengthen effective access to the

labor market for trafficking victims and their economic and social inclusion through professional training and employment.

2.2. Improve the Prevention of Forced Labor

1. Intensify efforts to deter human trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation, particularly by improving legal frameworks, sensitizing responsible officials, particularly labor inspectors, foreign nationals inspectors, police officers, and judicial officials to human trafficking for labor exploitation and the rights of victims. This is to be accomplished by strengthening efforts to curb the spread of fake job offers online, and revising rules to ensure the involvement of labor market and workforce migration actors who may come into contact with individuals trafficked for labor exploitation.
2. Intensify engagement with the private sector to curb labor exploitation, following the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)3 on Human Rights and Business. This will raise awareness of the significant role and responsibility of business entities in preventing human trafficking within supply chains, supporting victim rehabilitation and recovery, and providing access to effective legal remedies.
3. Build and strengthen the capacity of relevant institutions managing migration, labor, and employment to provide information on safe and legal migration options, intensifying efforts to prevent false job offers, especially those circulating online.
4. Promote clear criteria for the official registration and licensing of employment agencies and strengthen oversight of employment and private recruitment agencies to prevent all forms of human trafficking.
5. Establish channels to inform workers before they leave Bosnia and Herzegovina on how to report and seek help without fear of retaliation in cases of being a subject of abuse or trafficking for purpose of forced labor exploitation abroad.
6. Ensure fair working conditions for all employees, regardless of nationality or origin, by introducing effective and comprehensive labor inspection controls through regular checks of employers hiring foreign workers. These inspections will verify whether employers comply with legal regulations related to foreign employment (work hours, pay, annual leave, and other rights) to prevent abuse and exploitation of the workforce.
7. Provide sufficient staff and resources for labor inspectors to enable their leading role in preventing and identifying human trafficking for labor exploitation.
8. Ensure that labor inspectors, law enforcement officers, and other relevant actors increase fieldwork to identify human trafficking victims for labor exploitation, paying particular attention to high-risk sectors such as construction, agriculture, and catering industry.
9. Train labor inspectors, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges nationwide, including through joint training on human trafficking for labor exploitation and victims' rights.
10. Strengthen cooperation between police officers, labor inspectors, financial police, tax authorities, trade unions, and other civil society actors to identify human trafficking victims for labor exploitation and gather evidence needed for successful prosecution of these cases.
11. Encourage the private sector, trade unions, and civil society organizations to promote principles of protecting workers' human rights and fundamental freedoms in public procurement procedures to deter exploitative situations that foster human trafficking.

2.3. Improve Prevention of Human Trafficking and Labor Exploitation in Supply Chains

1. Establish effective mechanisms to combat human trafficking and labor exploitation in supply chains through:

-Regular and thorough inspections of business entities, particularly those operating in high-risk sectors prone to labor exploitation.

-Forming working groups within specific industries to collectively address issues of labor exploitation and human trafficking.

-Sharing best practices, resources, and strategies among business entities operating within similar sectors.

-Developing a platform for business entities to cooperate on supply chain challenges, exchange knowledge, and coordinate anti-exploitation efforts.

-Encouraging business entities to adopt and implement comprehensive human rights due diligence processes within their supply chains.

-Providing business entities with training and capacity-building programs to conduct effective risk assessments, identify gaps, and take proactive measures.

-Holding regular and purpose-driven meetings among business entities, non-governmental organizations, chambers of commerce, and authorities to combat labor exploitation.

-Establishing platforms that promote open dialogue among multiple stakeholders, knowledge sharing, and collaborative anti-trafficking initiatives.

-Encouraging active involvement from chambers of commerce to leverage their influence and resources, raising awareness among members on forced labor and human trafficking.

-Developing strategic partnerships with civil society organizations.

-Collaborating with chambers of commerce to incorporate human rights and ethical business practices into plans and programs, fostering a culture of responsible business conduct.

-Providing specialized training and resources to equip business entities, employees, and stakeholders with the knowledge and skills to identify and respond to labor exploitation.

2.4. Improve Prevention of Child Trafficking

1. Sensitize and train professionals who work with and for children to prevent human trafficking by increasing the enrollment of children from vulnerable groups in regular education, reducing the prevalence of these children in schools for children with disabilities, conducting risk assessments before returning trafficked children to their families, and improving foster family placement options.
2. Ensure the continuous operation and sustainability of day centers and shelters for children who work and live on the streets or are at risk of becoming street children, by

standardizing procedures and working methods in these institutions. Ensure adequate financial support for centers and shelters to guarantee the sustainability of their activities.

3. Ensure the continuous operation and sustainability of orphanages by standardizing procedures and working methods in these institutions and providing adequate financial support for such institutions.
4. Strengthen the resources of social work centers and services for effective guardianship of child trafficking victims.
5. Raise awareness of the risks of human trafficking, including recruitment and abuse through information and telecommunication technologies.
6. Develop and implement rehabilitation programs for children who live and work on the streets or are at risk of becoming street children, offering them and their families alternative options such as functional training, employment opportunities, placement of a child in alternative forms of care, guided by the best interest of the child.
7. Increase shelter capacity to provide emergency protection for children at risk of exploitation.
8. Ensure adequate human, technical, and financial resources to increase capacity and improve conditions in reception centers for migrant children and asylum-seeking children managed by relevant institutions.
9. Develop and implement programs to combat prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination against Roma in education systems.

2.5. Reduce Demand for Services of Trafficking Victims

1. Properly address the issue of demand for services provided forcibly by victims of trafficking and plan appropriate measures, such as:

-Raising public awareness about the criminality and punishment of using services provided by trafficking victims.

-Raising awareness among police officers, prosecutors, judges, labor inspectors, foreign nationals' inspectors, and other anti-trafficking actors on the criminality and punishment of using trafficking victims' services.

-Researching best practices, methods, and strategies to reduce demand for services provided by trafficking victims.

-Raising awareness of the responsibility and significant role of media and civil society in recognizing demand as one of the primary causes of human trafficking.

-Tailored PR campaigns involving, as necessary, public authorities and policy makers.

-Preventive measures, including educational programs for boys and girls during their schooling, highlighting the unacceptable nature of discrimination based on gender and its harmful consequences, the importance of gender equality, dignity, and the integrity of every human being.

SPECIAL GOAL 3 – CRIMINAL PROSECUTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING OFFENSES

Enhancing the detection and criminal prosecution of human trafficking offenders and related offenses

3.1 Strengthening the criminal justice response to human trafficking

1. Conduct proactive and timely investigations of human trafficking cases, starting from the moment there is knowledge of the offense or identification of a potential victim, regardless of whether an official criminal report has been filed. Use diverse evidence, including special investigative actions, financial investigation findings, and victim statements, to reduce the risk of re-traumatizing the victim throughout the procedure. Ensure effective criminal prosecution and imposition of sentences within the legally prescribed range for a crime of human trafficking to deter acts of trafficking in general.
2. Through supervisory mechanisms of prosecutors' investigation, ensure that human trafficking offenses are prosecuted under this specific charge whenever case circumstances allow, thereby avoiding lesser charges that carry lighter sentences for purpose of promoting general prevention.
3. Use plea bargaining proportionately in human trafficking cases when circumstances justify it, ensuring that the agreed criminal sanctions fulfill prosecutorial goals and general prevention. The plea bargaining agreement should include provisions for material and non-material compensation for the victim, which the perpetrator must fulfill before finalizing the plea.
4. Strengthen efforts to investigate, prosecute, and secure convictions in cases of human trafficking for labor exploitation, involving labor and tax inspectors.
5. Ensure systematic and continuous training of police officers, prosecutors, judges, and foreign affairs inspectors on relevant provisions of criminal code, criminal procedure code, and other human trafficking-related regulations. This training is to be provided by the Agency for Education and Training of Staff, entity police academies and judicial & prosecutorial training centers. Training should be updated regularly to reflect changes in trafficking trends and new methods used by traffickers.
6. Enhance law enforcement institutions' capacity to investigate complex human trafficking cases.
7. The Chief Prosecutor will designate prosecutors to handle human trafficking cases and inform the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council to assign these cases systematically through TCMS to specialized prosecutors.
8. Train judges to understand the severity of human trafficking offenses during sentencing. Familiarize prosecutors and judges with issues of secondary trauma and victim-centered approaches, ensuring that witness support officers from courts and prosecutors' offices are involved in working with trafficking victims.
9. Provide court interpreters for Romani and other languages spoken by migrants, facilitating effective investigations and improving access to justice for all citizens regardless of their linguistic or cultural background.
10. Invest in the material and technical equipment of institutions involved in combating human trafficking, including relevant resources, technologies, and tools to improve their ability to tackle human trafficking challenges and provide adequate support to victims.
11. Continuously conduct training on handling minors in criminal proceedings. Certify police officers, prosecutors, social workers, psychologists, legal representatives, and lawyers according to laws on child and minor protection in criminal proceedings.

3.2 Implement non-punishment provisions for trafficking victims

1. Consistently apply legal provisions, guidelines, and mandatory instructions that prohibit the punishment of human trafficking victims for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of their trafficking, particularly victims trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced begging, and coerced criminal activities.

2. Conduct systematic and continuous training for police, inspections, prosecutors, and courts on this topic.

3.3 Intensify criminal prosecution of those using services from trafficking victims

1. Consistently enforce legal provisions to penalize users of services provided by human trafficking victims.
2. Deliver systematic and continuous training for police, inspections, prosecutors, and courts on this topic.

3.4 Intensify criminal prosecution of legal entities involved in human trafficking

1. Consistently apply legal provisions regarding the responsibility of legal entities for human trafficking offenses.
2. Deliver systematic and continuous training for police, inspections, prosecutors, and courts on this topic.

3.5 Ensure compensation for human trafficking victims in criminal proceedings

1. Facilitate easier access to compensation for human trafficking victims in criminal proceedings, making it an essential element of the process rather than just an option, available to courts.
2. Train judges on awarding compensation in criminal cases, establish procedures for confiscating illegal assets from traffickers, and implement effective methods for timely compensation receipt.
3. Include compensation for damages in plea agreements.
4. Promote the importance of compensation among prosecutors and encourage action to secure victims' property claims in criminal proceedings.
5. Invite free legal aid offices, NGOs, and lawyers to provide legal assistance to victims at the earliest stage, particularly regarding compensation in criminal proceedings.

3.6 Improve victim rights protection in criminal proceedings

1. Strengthen the focus of all competent institutions in criminal proceedings on individuals harmed by human trafficking offenses, primarily victims, through various activities, including:

-Adopting amendments to criminal legislation to define "human trafficking victim" distinctly from "injured party"

-Ensuring practical use of available measures to safeguard victims and witnesses from intimidation before, during, and after investigations and trials, with necessary involvement of court and prosecutor's office witness support officers

-Providing legal representation for human trafficking victims through free legal aid offices, NGOs, and attorneys at law, to safeguard their rights throughout the criminal process and allow prosecutors to focus on proving the offense

-Ensuring special protection for minors, human trafficking victims, and witnesses throughout criminal proceedings, regardless of age or type of exploitation, in accordance with the child's best interests

-Consistently utilizing available measures to protect human trafficking victims and witnesses from intimidation during investigation, trial, and post-trial stages, especially using witness protection laws for threatened and endangered witnesses

-Ensuring the protection of trafficking victims' private lives and identities by issuing guidelines to relevant professionals and encouraging media to protect victims' privacy and identity through self-regulation or regulatory/co-regulatory measures

- Developing and implementing policies to separate a procedure of formal victim identification and granting of status of „victim „from their cooperation in investigation and prosecution

-Applying victim-centered approaches in prosecution, especially for children, and increasing access to justice by allocating sufficient resources to NGOs providing legal aid.

3.7 Increase enforcement of asset forfeiture measures in human trafficking cases

1. Consistently enforce existing asset forfeiture laws, intensifying efforts to identify, temporarily and permanently confiscate assets gained through acts of human trafficking, by ensuring efficient management of confiscated assets.
2. Consistently apply procedures for confiscating unlawfully obtained assets from traffickers and introduce effective methods for prompt compensation for trafficking victims.
3. Conduct mandatory financial investigations in human trafficking cases.

3.8. Enhance the Criminal Justice Response in Cases of Crimes Similar to Human Trafficking by Treating Them as Human Trafficking Whenever Possible

1. Strengthen the criminal justice response to human trafficking, including:

-Improving and harmonizing relevant criminal law provisions by clearly distinguishing between human trafficking offenses and related crimes, such as exploitation of children for pornography, exploitation of children in pornographic performances, inducing a child into prostitution, neglect, and abuse of a child or minor. This shall ensure that cases with elements constituting human trafficking are prosecuted as such, rather than as similar, lesser offenses with milder penalties or as misdemeanors.

-Conducting proactive and prompt investigations of human trafficking offenses, regardless of whether a criminal report has been filed, using all available evidence, including evidence gathered through special investigative actions, financial evidence,

documents, and digital evidence, thereby reducing reliance on victim or witness testimonies, and

-Ensuring, through oversight and control mechanisms of prosecutorial investigations, that human trafficking offenses are prosecuted as such rather than as lesser crimes whenever case circumstances allow, resulting in effective, proportionate, and deterrent sanctions.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4 – SAFEGUARDING VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

Ensure sustainable programs and procedures for proactive safeguarding and assistance for victims of all forms of trafficking, with a focus on vulnerable groups

4.1. Improve Identification of Human Trafficking Victims

1. Take additional steps to improve victim identification processes by ensuring in particular:

-Official identification of victims is not dependent on their cooperation with investigative and prosecutorial authorities.

-Strengthen multidisciplinary cooperation in identification processes by involving specialized civil society organizations, labor inspectors, social workers, and other professionals, ensuring they are trained in using tools and indicators to identify potential victims.

-Ensure that all actors adopt a more proactive approach and intensify fieldwork to identify victims across all forms of human trafficking.

-Continue establishing mobile identification teams in cities and municipalities; and adopting local protocols to combat trafficking in cities and municipalities.

-Enhance detection of potential victims at national borders, particularly in migration flows.

-Increase efforts to ensure forced begging is recognized as a form of trafficking by raising awareness and training the judiciary and police on forced begging as a type of trafficking.

-Ensure victim identification and subsequent protection do not depend on prosecutorial classification of other crime instead of trafficking, preventing the retraction of victim status when trafficking is suspected.

-Legally define procedures for identifying various forms of human trafficking, covering adults and children, citizens, and foreigners, with clear indicators and risk factors. Train police, prosecutors, judges, and other first responders meeting victims to apply these legal tools.

-Include trained cultural mediators in the identification of trafficking victims among migrants, including unaccompanied children and Roma.

-Strengthen efforts for proactive identification of labor exploitation trafficking victims.

-Focus on identifying trafficking victims among migrants and asylum seekers through training and clear operational guidance for frontline professionals. Ensure gender- and culturally-sensitive interviews with migrants and asylum seekers, and hire/engage a sufficient number of trained translators and cultural mediators for more effective interactions with them.

-Include the topic of human trafficking and victim identification in curricula, and train teaching staff to respond appropriately in a case of suspicion of trafficking cases in schools.

4.2. Enhance General Protection and Assistance Measures for Trafficking Victims

1. Ensure a victim-centered approach in all anti-trafficking activities, including:

-Ensure that all individuals with indications of their subject to trafficking are informed of their rights and support organizations at the first point of contact.

-Ensure that all potential and officially identified trafficking victims, regardless of citizenship or criminal case status, and regardless of their placement in shelter, receive assistance according to their individual needs.

-Train and guide law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, witness support staff, coordination team members, migrant reception center staff, and shelter personnel to properly explain rights to trafficking victims, considering their cognitive abilities and psychological state.

-Ensure interpreters are available for multiple languages, including Romani.

-Define a set of social measures and services suitable for trafficking victims that meet their reintegration needs, and develop long-term support and integration programs.

-Conduct security risk assessments in all trafficking cases, through a standardized procedure recognizing victim fears and ensuring mechanisms to protect victims and their immediate family.

-Strictly adhere to regulations protecting the privacy and identity of trafficking victims.

-Ensure the full implementation of the "recovery and reflection" period for all phases of procedures involving victims.

-Standardize victim assistance services nationwide, and provide access to assistance outside safe houses, including specialized services for all victims regardless of gender.

-Include Roma population in the process of defining victim assistance measures.

-Establish standard operating procedures for victim identification, referral, and assistance across all government levels and promote cooperation among these levels.

-Continue providing psychological support services to trafficking victims.

-Strengthen effective labor market access for trafficking victims, and support their economic and social inclusion through vocational training, employment opportunities, awareness among

employers, promotion of micro-enterprises, social enterprises, and public-private partnerships, as well as through employment programs aimed to facilitate employment of victims of trafficking.

-Conduct continuous and multidisciplinary training for all responsible institutions at all levels of government on trafficking prevention, victim identification, and victim handling, including interviews and support referrals. This should be integrated into regular training programs for various professionals including: police, foreign inspectors, prosecutors, judges, lawyers, psychologists employed by courts/prosecutors offices, labor inspectors, social workers, healthcare professionals, personnel taking care of children, free legal aid provider's staff, and consular officers.

-Provide accommodation for trafficking victims within the first 72 hours after identification in all cantons, Brčko District, and Republika Srpska.

-Supervise safe house services provided to victims, with oversight by the Ministry of Security based on its approved methodology, to be adopted by the Ministry of Security.

-Compile a list of mandatory training curricula for safe house employees.

-Establish reintegration mechanisms for trafficking victims.

-Adopt and implement guidelines and standards for providing assistance to victims.

4.3. Ensure Special Protection for Women Victims of Human Trafficking

1. Ensure that women, who are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, receive special protection by:

-Supporting programs for the economic empowerment of women trafficking victims, particularly marginalized women.

-Involving female police investigators in trafficking cases involving female victims, especially in cases of suspected sexual exploitation and forced marriage.

-Working to prevent stigmatization and reduce stereotypes towards women trafficking victims of sexual exploitation among officers and the public.

-Enhancing the capacity and specialization of safe houses/shelters to support women victims of sexual exploitation, recognizing the multiple forms of their victimization (rape, physical violence, gender-based discrimination, sexual services).

-Strengthening law enforcement and prosecutorial agency capacity to understand the trauma of sexual violence and the impacts of sexual exploitation trafficking on victims.

-Developing specialized assistance programs for girls who are victims of forced marriage according to their specific needs.

4.4. Ensure Special Protection and Assistance for Child Victims of Human Trafficking

1. Improve identification and assistance for child victims by ensuring:

-All stakeholders take a proactive approach in fieldwork to identify potential child trafficking victims, paying special attention to street children and involving Roma mediators when needed.

-Provide further training to police, prosecutors, NGOs, social care centers, and child specialists with guidelines for identifying child victims or potential trafficking victims, based on a shared understanding of trafficking pattern for forced begging, forced crime, and early, child, or forced marriage.

-Ensure day centers for children at risk of or already working and living on the streets, and social welfare centers are adequately funded and resourced. Ensure that social workers are properly equipped with resources to act as temporary guardians.

-Ensure child trafficking victims across the country receive appropriate accommodation by establishing specialized children's safe houses nationwide.

-Increase efforts to ensure that trafficking victims aged 16 and older receive the same level of protection as younger children. Ensure that all experts involved in working with children received an interdisciplinary training on children's rights and needs. This training is to be delivered by certified lecturers within system solutions or through authorized certification institutes.

-Establish temporary reception centers as immediate solutions for housing potential child trafficking victims.

-Establish monitoring mechanisms for child trafficking victims in safe houses to ensure access to necessary services (education, health care, legal advice, repatriation, reintegration) and reporting on services provided.

-Organize schooling for children in safe houses.

-Establish age assessment mechanisms for children at risk of trafficking in line with international standards, children's rights, and the child's best interests.

4.5. Ensure Special Protection for Foreign Victims of Human Trafficking

1. Ensure that potential or identified foreign trafficking victims enjoy specific rights protected by international and domestic law by:

-Ensuring foreign trafficking victims are properly informed about their right to renewable humanitarian residence permits and the right to seek asylum.

-Ensuring that returns of foreign trafficking victims to their countries of origin or (domestic victims) back to Bosnia and Herzegovina are conducted with full respect for their rights, safety, and dignity, and the principle of the child's best interests.

-Respecting the obligation of *non-refoulement* principle when reviewing asylum applications from trafficking victims who are at risk of re-trafficking or other forms of persecution if returned to their countries of origin or stay.

-Enabling institutions to effectively conduct early identification procedures for potential trafficking victims among migrants.

-Ensuring that social welfare centers have adequate human and financial resources for timely and legal guardianship of unaccompanied migrant children and separated migrant children who are trafficking victims.

4.6. Strengthen Mechanisms for Legal Aid and Free Legal Support for Trafficking Victims

1. Strengthen civil society organizations that provide free legal support to victims, regardless of their residence status or citizenship, to facilitate claims for property rights.
2. Ensure that trafficking victims have guaranteed access to justice by:

-Providing legal aid as soon as trafficking indicators are present.

-Informing trafficking victims of their right to legal aid early in the criminal process. In this regard, prosecutors and police should notify safe houses and guardians for child victims about the initiation of criminal proceedings.

-Strengthening the role of legal aid centers in providing free legal support to trafficking victims. Accordingly, free legal aid laws should be aligned to ensure that victims are recognized as eligible for free legal aid in any center throughout the country.

-Adequately funding NGOs and legal aid centers providing free legal assistance to trafficking victims.

-Encouraging authorities and bar associations to train and specialize lawyers in providing legal assistance to trafficking victims, especially children.

3. Include free legal aid providers (governmental and non-governmental organizations) in the trafficking victim referral mechanism and anti-trafficking system. Provide funding for the tasks provided to support victims of trafficking.

4.7. Improve Compensation for Trafficking Victims

1. Establish mechanisms to ensure victims have guaranteed access to compensation by:

-Systematically informing trafficking victims about their right to claim compensation in criminal and civil proceedings (and steps to be followed) and providing effective legal aid early in the process to obtain their rights.

-Collecting evidence of damages suffered by victims, including financial gain of trafficker from exploitation or loss suffered by victim, as part of criminal investigations to support compensation claims in court.

-Fully using seizure and confiscation laws, and international cooperation, to ensure compensation for trafficking victims and prompt restitution of assets to victims seized in criminal proceedings.

-Supporting victims in filing compensation claims, with access to free legal aid.

-Including victim compensation in training programs for lawyers, prosecutors, and judge

SPECIFIC GOAL 5 – PARTNERSHIP

The goal is to enhance partnerships and cooperation among competent institutions and authorized organizations at all levels of government aimed at a more effective response to various forms of human trafficking within Bosnia and Herzegovina and worldwide.

5.1. Improve cooperation with civil society, trade unions, the private sector, and academia

1. Include all relevant institutions at all levels of government in coordination teams to combat human trafficking, especially those whose activities may contribute to prevention, prosecution of traffickers, or support and assistance to trafficking victims.
2. Expand the involvement of civil society organizations, the private and business sector, trade unions, bar associations, academia, and other organizations within coordination teams at all levels of government in coordination teams, or through other forms of joint action, to work on prevention, prosecution, and support for human trafficking victims.
3. Involve representatives from the Roma community who are active in combating human trafficking in the decision-making processes related to anti-trafficking efforts.

5.2. Enhance international cooperation

1. Continue strengthening cooperation with other states and international and regional organizations through joint initiatives for human trafficking prevention, investigations, and prosecution, with an increased focus on using joint investigative teams in investigations of cases of trafficking.
2. Establish cooperation and hold regular meetings between Bosnia and Herzegovina's Task Force on Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration and task forces from other countries, especially within the region, for information sharing and operational cooperation in combatting human trafficking.
3. Develop international cooperation for the protection and assistance of trafficking victims to ensure adequate risk assessment, safe repatriation, and effective reintegration of trafficking victims in their country of origin.
4. Continue international police and prosecutorial cooperation through Interpol, Europol, Frontex, Eurojust, SELEC, the MARRI Regional Centre, and other organizations through information exchange, coordination of activities, establishment of joint investigative teams, and other activities to combat international human trafficking. Utilize Europol and Interpol tools and services, especially databases, and make them available to law enforcement agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
5. Actively participate and contribute to the successful implementation of international, regional, and global operational actions and projects aimed at identifying victims and

combating human trafficking-related crimes, as well as participate in international and regional conferences.

6. Conclude police cooperation agreements to combat human trafficking with countries in the region and other interested countries.

5.3. Involve human trafficking victims in anti-trafficking efforts

1. Involve individuals who have experienced human trafficking in developing anti-trafficking policies and operational responses in order to strengthen the effectiveness of anti-trafficking measures. This shall be accomplished through developing and implementing effective measures to prevent trafficking, identify and rescue victims, and support their social and economic recovery. This process shall acknowledge principles of participation and strive to improve the protection of human rights and freedoms of trafficking victims, reduce inequalities and social conflicts, empower individuals and groups, and eliminate marginalization and discrimination against trafficking victims.
2. Conduct regular consultations between the Monitoring Team tasked with the strategy implementation and anti-trafficking coordination teams at all levels of government with organizations that represent legally and advocate for rights of trafficking victims.
3. Support the empowerment of anti trafficking organizations whose leaders or members include former victims of trafficking.