

FEASIBILITY STUDY

for setting-up Shelter for Victims of Human
Trafficking in the Republic of North Macedonia



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**for setting-up Shelter for
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in the Republic of North Macedonia**

Skopje, March 2024

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◆ 1. General overview

North Macedonia is the country of origin, transit and destination of victims of human trafficking. In previous years, there have been few identified victims of human trafficking. However, there is a large number of persons who have been preliminary identified as potential victims of human trafficking, as well as persons who belong to vulnerable groups.

North Macedonia puts efforts into harmonisation of its legislation and measures (for prevention, identification, protection of trafficking victims and prosecution of perpetrators) with international standards, and into providing an adequate support to victims and potential victims of human trafficking. Therefore, numerous trainings were organized for professionals working for the social protection system. The Ministry of labour and social policy has established an emergency accommodation service for women and child victims of human trafficking and other forms of sexual violence, in cooperation with a civil society organization.

Bearing in mind the growing need for support and accommodation (urgent and a long-term support), and a lack of accommodation for male trafficking victims, a better framework is needed in order to overcome the problems with accommodation and support for all categories of victims of human trafficking, children, in particular.

While preparing this study, a special attention was paid to ensure that the recommendations are matching the needs of trafficking victims in accordance with the international and domestic standards, and in a synergy with the existing network of support and services of the social protection system (state and civil society organisations). The long-term sustainability in terms of funding and the impact on the well-being of the beneficiaries, as well as concerns of the stakeholders were also considered.

◆ 2. Methodology

Bearing in mind the complexity of the analysed subject, the process of collecting, collating and analysing the obtained data requires different methodologies to be applied.

It is necessary to start by making a brief overview of the aspects related to the international and domestic legislation, regulating the support for victims of human trafficking in North Macedonia, as well as of their consistent application in certain phases of work with victims and potential victims of human trafficking (identification, emergency support, support during participation in criminal proceedings, support in reintegration, preparation and organisation of return).

This study is also reviewing the current framework and possible alternatives from the viewpoint of consistent its application and flexibility if there is an increased influx of victims and changes in the trends and needs of victims and potential victims (gender, age, citizenship, other specifics).

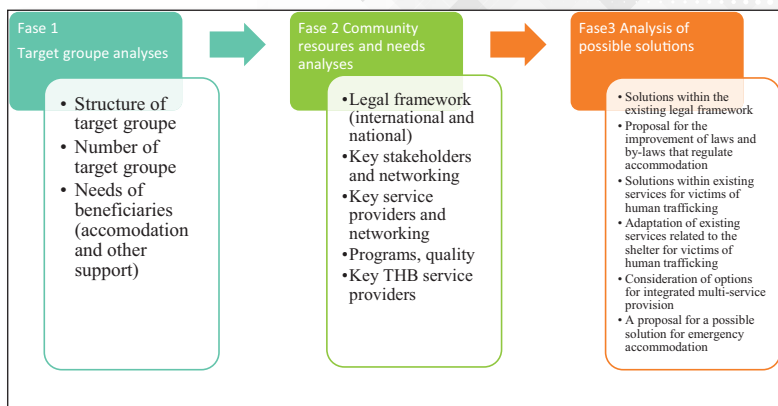
Therefore, the aim of this study is achieved by:

1. The analysis of the content of international and national frameworks, existing strategic documents, relevant reports and research regarding support and accommodation for victims and potential victims of human trafficking from official sources, statistics and administrative data, as well as data on the support and accommodation provided by the service providers.

2. Field research, which includes questionnaires, interviews and focus groups with open and closed questions, with representatives of the social protection system (centers for social work, accommodation facilities, relevant ministries), mobile teams, bodies in charge with investigation and prosecution (police, prosecutor's office), National Referral Mechanism (NRM), civil society organizations and providers of specialized services for victims of human trafficking. The aim is to gather information from the key stakeholders about the target group, needs, trends, specialised types of support for victims and their alternatives, good practice and challenges. Additionally, the field research provides a clear insight into the needs for support in various stages of victims' protection (identification, urgent support, medium-term and support in reintegration, preparation and organization of return, support during criminal proceedings) and the possibilities of providing integrated social services for victims of human trafficking and potential victims.

The key task of this study is to provide findings about the current situation and recommend better solutions for providing accommodation to victims, i.e., finding solutions that would have a greater impact on the well-being of service's beneficiaries, while optimizing costs in view of sustainability and doability of the proposed solution(s).

The process has three phases:



During the process of data collection (questionnaires, focus groups and interviews) there were inconsistent data that needed a clarification and additional data collection. This inconsistency mainly relates to the number of beneficiaries who need an accommodation, differences in understanding the risks for the victim, reasons for their longer stay in the Center for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, and the involvement of different stakeholders and their communication. This clarification is important in the context of the analysis and making proposals about the possible best sustainable solutions.

Methodology	Methodology	
	Number	Participants
Focus group - System of social support for victims	1	11
Focus group - Criminal prosecution system	1	7
Questionnaires about structure and needs for support on local and national level	7	3
Questionnaire about safety aspects	1	5
Questionnaire about services	1	1
Questionnaire for sustainability	1	0
Questionnaire for number, duration and reasons for shelter accommodation	1	1
Interviews with different service providers	5	9
Field visit to governmental shelter (CVHT) for women and girls	1	2
Field visit to NGO Open Gate, specialized NGO for THB ¹ (advocacy, prevention activities, urgent and reintegration services)	1	2
Field visit to Institution for accommodation of children „25 th May“, Skopje	1	5 ²
Field visit to private service provider (foster-family, preventive local community service for strengthening the families at risks) SOS Children's Village Skopje	1	2
Total	14	20

¹ Trafficking in human beings.

² 5 participants (3 professionals and 2 beneficiaries).

Table 1. Description of methodology

Secondary data sources were used for desk research in order to better understand the context, possible inconsistencies, or risks that may arise, in order to provide a recommendation for the best solution for accommodation and enhanced solution for the reception of victims of human trafficking. For this purpose, conventions, directives, protocols, strategic documents, laws and regulations, available analyses, international and domestic reports and recommendations were analysed.

Phase 1: Analysis of the target group

The purpose of this phase was to collect primary and secondary data on the structure, number and specific support needs of persons identified as victims, potential victims of human trafficking, or other vulnerable groups. Data collection is specifically focused on the need for a safe accommodation, recovery, re-establishment of stable functioning patterns and preparation for reintegration, or integration. A part of the collected data refers to other related target groups and existing services, which may influence, directly and indirectly, the shelter service for victims of human trafficking. In order to make a more precise projection about the possible number of identified and potential victims of human trafficking, relevant data for 2018-2022 were analysed. For the analysis of the target group, it was important to look into other related groups that may be at risk of human trafficking (children without adequate parental care, people with educational and social problems, victims of violence, people with behavioral problems, etc.).

The techniques used for data collection in Phase 1 were focus groups, questionnaires, desk analysis, and individual and group interviews. A methodological limitation in the application of this module is the lack of secondary quantitative data on the target groups in specific locations, that is, for each individual local self-government unit. There is no breakdown of the anti-trafficking data based on their location. Therefore, estimates are provided indirectly, using publicly available data for the national level and through additional communication with local stakeholders.

The key question that is investigated in Phase 1 is: What is the approximate number of potential and victims of human trafficking by age and gender? How many of them need support within the emergency accommodation service and what are the specific needs of the target group?

Phase 2: Analysis of community resources and needs (context analysis)

The purpose of Phase 2 was to provide, in addition to quantitative data, qualitative data on the existing mechanisms of the system's response to the needs of victims for support (primarily through emergency accommodation, and then through other forms of support that can directly or indirectly affect this service). The quality of the support provided to victims of human trafficking and their recovery largely depends on the

recognition of their needs, but also on the support that the community can provide through various available services. The support system primarily refers to the legal framework (laws, by-laws, mechanisms of their implementation), the existence of a developed network of services of the social protection system, but also the system of criminal prosecution of perpetrators, health, educational and employment support, as well as other support measures. It is crucial to learn more about the community context, especially about the community resources to support the target group, before and after the emergency care service (victims and potential victims of human trafficking, but also related target groups). Data on community resources help to identify unaddressed or inadequately addressed needs of the target group, which represents the gap between the current situation of the target group and what is desirable. It is this part of the analysis that helps recommend solutions that will contribute to the support of the target group, which is coordinated with other resources, and thus, more durable and cost-beneficial.

A key question to be explored in Phase 2 is whether and what resources exist in the community (which in synergy with the emergency accommodation service) can contribute to a better care for victims and potential victims of human trafficking.

Phase 3: Analysis of possible solutions

The purpose of the analysis of possible solutions is to provide a more precise answer to the topic of this study - the feasibility of the shelter service for urgent care of victims and potential victims of human trafficking. In this context, the following was considered: a. possible options in the existing legal framework, as well as possible improvements to that framework; b. a better use of the existing social protection service systems, or their adaptation; and c. the integrated provision of services. At the end, the study offers an assessment of the feasibility of the best solution.

Through this process, the capacities and motivation of the stakeholders at the local and national levels were examined, therefore, contributing to informed and evidence-based recommendations about who could be in the best position to respond and how to the identified needs of the target group, or parts of the target group, depending on their age, gender, citizenship, etc. In order to gather more detailed information, questionnaires were prepared and filled-in by the stakeholders, interviews and focus groups were conducted, and field visits were organized. The above helped obtain information about the stakeholders' motivation for involvement, their capacities to answer the needs of the target group and possible challenges they have been facing.

The key questions examined in Phase 3 are: Who are the relevant interested parties, what are their strengths, attitudes and interests in relation to addressing the need for urgent care for victims and potential victims of human trafficking? Whether the proposed way of implementing the service for emergency support

for victims is adequate, and whether it fully meets the needs of the target group (in view of age, gender, citizenship etc.)?

◆ 3. Overview of international regulations and recommendations

This chapter is giving an overview of the international legal framework (Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings³, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children⁴ and Directive 2011/36/EU), as well as of the recommendations offered by GRETA⁵ and by the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, relevant for the support offered to the victims of human trafficking. Focus is placed on children and gender issues.

3.1. Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

The most important international convention that regulates this area is the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (the Convention). In the broadest way so far, it encompasses all forms of exploitation, as one of the three elements of the crime of human trafficking. The Convention includes the aspects of prevention, protection of victims of human trafficking and prosecution of traffickers. It guarantees the rights of the trafficking victims under the prism of non-discrimination and gender equality. The Convention guarantees the rights to all persons regardless of their gender, race, religion, political orientation and other characteristics.

In Article 12 of the Convention, the ratifying states are requested to adopt legal measures that enable the victims to be provided with physical, psychological and social recovery. This support should at least include appropriate safe accommodation, psychological and material support, access to emergency health support, translation when necessary, information and advice on rights and existing support in a language that the victim understands, representation of the rights and interests of the victim in criminal proceedings, access to education for children. Every victim should receive adequate protection of her safety, regulated residence, health care, access to the labor market, education and training. Support must be provided through cooperation of the institutions and civil society organisations, regardless of the victim's willingness to participate in criminal proceedings as a witness.

3 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings [CETS 197 - Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings \(coe.int\)](#)

4 The Palermo Protocol.

5 Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

The support to the victim is provided with her consent and prior information. When it comes to children, special attention should be paid to their sensitive position in terms of their accommodation, education and health. The right to a period of recovery and reflection of at least 30 days, should be provided to all persons, when there is a reasonable basis for suspecting that they may be victims of human trafficking.

Article 28 of the Convention describes the protection of victims, witnesses and their cooperation with the justice system. During criminal proceedings, it is necessary to adequately protect victims (especially children) from potential retaliation or intimidation.

3.2 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons⁶

The purpose of the Palermo Protocol is to prevent and combat human trafficking, paying particular attention to women and children, and to protect and assist victims of trafficking with full respect for their human rights. Article 6 defines assistance to and protection of victims of trafficking in persons aiming at protecting their privacy and identity, inter alia, by confidential judicial proceedings. The victims should be informed about the relevant judicial and administrative proceedings, and obtain access to compensation. The assistance should enable views and concerns of the victims to be presented and considered at appropriate stages of criminal proceedings against the perpetrators, in a manner not prejudicial to the rights of the defense. Each country should implement measures to enable physical, psychological and social recovery of victims of human trafficking, in cooperation with non-governmental and civil society organizations. Victims' physical safety shall also be ensured.

The victims are entitled to: a. housing; b. counselling and information, in particular, on their legal rights in a language they understand; c. assistance, including medical, psychological, material; and employment, educational and training opportunities. The state parties take into consideration the age, gender and specific needs of victims of trafficking when applying these provisions.

3.3. Directive 2011/36/EU⁷

The aim of the Directive is to set out a unified and comprehensive approach to the human rights-based fight against human trafficking. The Directive sets minimum standards for prevention, criminal prosecution and protection of the rights of victims of human trafficking. The Directive recognises the differences

6 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. [Microsoft Word - United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2005_2.doc \(unodc.org\)](#)

7 European Union Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating human trafficking and protecting victims of such trafficking [Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA \(europa.eu\)](#)

based on gender for trafficking victims, as trafficking in women and men often is committed with a different purposes, and thus, assistance and support measures should also be gender-specific. The Directive sets out minimum standards for the protection of victims of human trafficking that member states must incorporate in their legislation and guarantee their implementation.

The Directive mandates the member states take the necessary measures to ensure that victims are provided with assistance and support before, during and for an appropriate period of time after the conclusion of criminal proceedings. The measures must be provided as soon as the competent authorities reasonably suspect that the person is a victim of human trafficking. Assistance and support to the victim is not conditional upon her willingness to cooperate in the criminal investigation, prosecution, or trial. Victims with a disability, mental or psychological disorder, pregnant victims, victims who were subjected to a severe form of psychological, physical or sexual violence should receive appropriate support.

During investigation and criminal proceedings, Member States must ensure to the trafficking victims an immediate access to legal advice and legal representation, including for seeking compensation. Legal advice and legal representation should be pro bono when the victim does not have sufficient financial resources. Victims of human trafficking receive special treatment in accordance with the national law to prevent secondary victimisation. For example, unnecessary repetition of interviews during investigation, prosecution or trial should be avoided, visual contacts between the victims and the defendants during hearings should not be allowed by using an appropriate communication technology, public from hearings should be excluded and the victims should not be unnecessarily questioned about their private life.

The Directive stipulates that when providing assistance, support and protection to child trafficking victims, the best interests of the child must always be taken into account. It is important that member states take concrete measures to help and support child victims of human trafficking in a short and long-term and help with their physical and psycho-social recovery. A permanent solution for each child victim is looked for, upon an individual assessment of its individual circumstances, while taking into consideration the child' opinion, needs and concerns. Within a reasonable period of time, member states must ensure access to education for the child victims and appoint a guardian, or representative from the moment the child has been identified, if it is left without parental care, or if the parents are unfit to ensure its best interest or represent the child. The member states take measures to provide help and support to the family of the child victim of human trafficking within their territory.

3.4. GRETA evaluation report⁸

According to the data provided by GRETA⁹ in its latest report, North Macedonia is the country of origin, transit and destination for victims of human trafficking. Although in previous years the number of identified victims of human trafficking has been low (from 2017 on-wards, 2-9 victims of human trafficking have been identified annually, except for 2021 when 39 were identified), there is a large number of persons who have been identified as potential victims of human trafficking (from 2017 to 2021, as many as 361 potential victims of human trafficking), as well as persons belonging to vulnerable groups. Only from March 2018 to December 2019, 797 vulnerable persons were preliminarily identified and referred for support by the mobile team.

GRETA emphasised that there are specific state support programs for the reintegration of victims of human trafficking, but that they are not implemented effectively due to a lack of funding and insufficient involvement of the local communities.

GRETA expresses concern over the continued absence of safe accommodation for adult male. Under point 166, the Report states that there is still no shelter for the accommodation of adult male victims, nor is there a possibility to divide the existing shelter for minors and adults. Due to a lack of accommodation, some potential victims are left without support and accommodation. The intention of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to open a new shelter with a capacity for 15 victims was welcomed by GRETA.

GRETA welcomes the efforts made to prevent and raise awareness about child trafficking, but remains concerned about the lack of adequate housing for children potential victims of human trafficking. It emphasises the importance of enabling child victims of human trafficking to get access to specialised support and accommodation and to strengthen capacities of social work centers for prevention, detection and support of child victims of human trafficking.

GRETA also states in point 167 of its Report that the Reception Center for Foreigners is inadequate to support victims, due to a lack of professional support staff. As soon as it is established that there is a reasonable basis of suspicion that a person is a victim of human trafficking, he/she should be transferred to a shelter for victims of human trafficking, as soon as she/he is issued with a temporary residence permit.

GRETA urges that adequate funding and staffing be provided to support victims, including support from the civil society organisations, and ensure adequate accommodation and support for potential and identified victims of human trafficking. It urges that all domestic and foreign potential and identified trafficking victims be offered a period of reflection and recovery.

⁸ EVALUATION REPORT NORTH MACEDONIA, Third evaluation round, GRETA (2023)02 Published on 24 March 2023 [1680aaa573 \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/dahlg/HumanRights/EGTR/EGTR%202023/EGTR%202023_1680aaa573.aspx)

⁹ Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

GRETA welcomes the existing agreements for providing psycho-social support to victims of human trafficking and calls on the authorities to continue the arrangement.

It further suggests that the authorities need to strengthen their cooperation with the labor market, in order to enable a socio-economic inclusion of victims and provide them with courses and trainings for employment.

Children should be provided with access to justice, sensitive to their needs. Everyone who comes into contact and communicates with the child during investigation and judicial proceedings must have the appropriate training. He/she must communicate with the child in accordance with its age and level of maturity.

GRETA further states that according to NGOs, a large number of children are in street situations and drop out of school. GRETA believes that the authorities should develop rehabilitation programs for children in street situations, which would include trainings for them and their families, a chance for employment, and a placement in alternative care in the best interest of the child.

3.5. Recommendations of the National Rapporteur on human trafficking

The acting National Rapporteur for Human Trafficking provided several recommendations on providing care to human trafficking victims in her 2021 and 2022 annual reports. First of all, the reports recommend increasing the capacities for safe accommodation of child and adult victims of human trafficking in accordance with their age, gender, citizenship and status of identified or potential victim. Second, they note the necessity to include children as soon as possible in the regular education system, and empower victims through a more intense support in the process of integration/reintegration. Third, the reports also stress the need to establish a shelter for children at risk (children in street situation, children who are forced to beg, children who ran away from home, or are in a conflict with the law, victims of violence, etc.). Finally, the reports recommend drawing a list of professionals involved in the protection of child victims, who will be trained on a special approach in working with children and who are familiar with children's needs for legal aid.

3.6. International standards and best practices – shelters for trafficking victims

Shelter for victims of human trafficking plays a crucial role in providing safety, support, and rehabilitation for survivors who have experienced severe trauma and exploitation. The 24-hour accommodation service at the shelter necessitates certain standards of the shelter services and premises. The design of a shelter for victims of trafficking has not been sufficiently studied and there are no specific design instructions. However, it is crucial to ensure that the design of the accommodation in which trafficking victims are placed will work towards their healing, emotional stability and meeting their needs. It is essential

to establish and adhere to positive practices and standards regarding shelters in order to effectively meet the diverse needs of trafficking survivors. Listed below are some of the key practices and standards that are important for effective accommodation for trafficking victims, as well as Open Gate – La Strada’s recommendations resulting from the long-term management of the Center for Victims of Human Trafficking in North Macedonia.

Location, safety and security:

- Discreet location to protect the anonymity of residents and reduce risk situations.
- Located at a sufficient distance from areas known for prostitution and criminal activities.
- Located in a place that has easy access to medical facilities, pharmacies, bank, police station, grocery stores, primary and secondary school.
- It has strict access control measures to prevent potential threats towards the survivors.
- It has a security system (e.g., alarm, panic button, cameras for a video surveillance at the entrance of the building, etc.) connected with the Ministry of the Interior to prevent unauthorized entry for the personnel safety. Preferably, there could be cameras in the hallways, only for the staff monitoring the movement and safety of beneficiaries.
- It has two secured doors, one as the main entrance and another used as an emergency evacuation exit.
- There are employed staff trained in crisis intervention to handle security concerns, appropriately.
- It is accessible to people with special needs.
- The facility is clean and tidy.

Accommodation capacities:

- Separate accommodation for female and male victims of trafficking.
- Separate accommodation for children and adults.
- Separate accommodation for mothers with children and pregnant women.
- Separate accommodation for persons in the adaptation period and persons with a longer stay in the shelter during the reintegration period.

The rooms and the facilities would be the same regardless of the gender, age and status of the persons, but the differences will be taken into consideration for the furniture and the equipment (e.g. educational materials depending on the age and gender, toys and furniture for children, wall paintings, etc.).

Male and female accommodation may be in the same building, with separate sleeping rooms and separate entrances. Example, the Netherlands offers accommodation for male and female beneficiaries in the same building with different entrances, but there is a room for joint activities.

Separate accommodation would be divided into a crisis center during the adaptation period where higher measures for the safety of persons would be applied, as follows:

- 24-hour presence of experts,
- staff offices near the rooms of the beneficiaries,
- rooms for individual and group accommodation according to the needs assessment,
- adapted space and objects (no sharp objects, glass or cutlery that is fragile).

Separate accommodation for a long-term stay during the (re)integration period would include:

- a group accommodation,
- separate rooms for education (room for computers, classroom, etc.),
- reduced security oversight,
- a possibility of going out independently/going to school regularly.

Ideally, there would be a third division for independent housing with support, where human trafficking victims would be living independently, while experts would monitor their reintegration process.

Shelter premises:

The whole area of the shelter should be divided into three parts, namely a restricted area, an area for general use and an administrative part. Shelter for children merits special consideration. The design of the space needs to convey a clear sense of direction and establish a clear distinction between various functions of the various spaces. Each space must be of a size ensuring functionality, accessibility, efficient circulation, and meeting the physical and psychological needs of the residents. Soundproofing is needed in every area since noise reduction and acoustics privacy are important considerations. All of the premises should be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Restricted area (bedrooms, rooms for consultation, toilets, etc.):

- A designated space to give the beneficiaries the option to choose between privacy and companionship following their preferences and needs in the course of their long recovery.
- Access to natural light and air in the rooms, equipped with the basic amenities organized in a manner that safeguards the residents' safety.
- Private toilets and bathrooms in the bedrooms. Each room should have a private bathroom for private use only for the beneficiaries residing in that particular room equipped with a sink, a toilet seat and a shower/a bathtub.

- Playrooms furnished with special equipment and rooms for educational purposes for children, in addition to the bedrooms.
- The rooms for mothers with children decorated with children's furniture and objects such as children's beds, strollers, playgrounds, etc.
- Counselling room / Meeting room for assistance and advice where beneficiaries who require private counselling sessions or meetings can talk with support staff members about private matters.

General use area (kitchen, cafeteria, bathrooms, laundry and toilets, residential area for recreation and entertainment and areas for other kinds of group activities):

- Outdoor area (closed yard, playground, garden, greenery together with the arrangement of seating for isolation, socialization, and group work activities) since access to nature and fresh air has therapeutic effects on an individual.
- Separate rooms for different activities such as: educational training room/classroom, computer room, arts and crafts room, library/reading room.
- A room equipped for group meetings and group therapy sessions for a larger number of beneficiaries.
- Installation of a kitchen island with bar stools will facilitate the delivery of cooking lessons that will enable residents to learn new skills.
- Two laundry rooms each fitted with necessary appliances (washing machines, dryers, sinks, ironing boards and irons) for both staff and residents; one for staff use (bed sheets, towels, cleaning and maintenance equipment) and the other for residents' personal use.
- A "public" bathroom (no shower or bathtub, only sink and a toilet seat) close to the rooms where activities are conducted, which will be shared by all of the beneficiaries.

Administrative area (administrative rooms for the shelter staff and documentation):

- Staff's office equipped with all the necessary communication and computer equipment. (if not possible to have an office in all shelters, it can be in the emergency shelter area to be used by all staff, keeping documentation for both emergency and long-term accommodated beneficiaries).
- Reception area adjacent to the main entrance for the new residents to be greeted upon arrival and explained the services in the shelter (for the emergency shelter, only).
- Furniture locks in all rooms in the administrative area to keep documentation or medication out of a reach of the residents.
- Restrooms near the staff's offices for staff use only.

◆ 4. Overview of the domestic strategic and legal framework

North Macedonia has taken different measures to improve strategic framework on prevention and fight against human trafficking, and protection of victims and potential victims of human trafficking. It adopted the National Strategy and National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration 2021-2025, as well as the National Action Plan for Combating Child Trafficking 2021-2025. The Ombudsman office now acts as the National Rapporteur for the fight against human trafficking. A number of anti-trafficking trainings were delivered to police, social workers, education professionals, labor inspectors, as well as mobile teams, which significantly improved the recognition of vulnerable groups, as well as the preliminary identification of potential victims of human trafficking.

4.1. Brief overview of the legal framework

The domestic legal framework has undergone a series of changes over the years, and the legal and institutional framework for combating human trafficking was strengthened. The Criminal Code is compliant with the definition of the crime of human trafficking set out in the UN Palermo Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. It incriminates the acts: "Trafficking in human beings" in article (418-a) and "Trafficking in children" in article (418-d) as well as "Organizing a group and encouraging the commission of the acts of human trafficking, child trafficking and migrant smuggling" in the article (418-c).

The 2019 **Law on Social Protection** provides a service of temporary stay to victims of human trafficking from 3 months to 1 year (Article 83), an intervention accommodation for child victims of human trafficking for up to 30 days (Article 92) and the right to a health care (Article 66). The service for the community (Article 79) includes services of daily, temporary residence, resocialization, rehabilitation with the aim of enabling the beneficiaries to continue living in their own home, that is, in the community and prevention of the extra-familial protection.

The **Law on Family** provides for a guardianship of child victims of human trafficking, which is particularly significant for their identification and reintegration.

The **Law on free legal aid** guarantees victims of human trafficking access to free legal aid and legal representation in the proceedings for the protection of their rights and for obtaining a compensation. However, its implementation in practice proved difficult.

The **Law on Foreigners** provides for a temporary stay of victims of human trafficking and a period of recovery and reflection (Article 121) offering them a

period for decision-making and a recovery free from influence of traffickers. The period of recovery and reflection is not conditional upon a cooperation of the victim with the criminal law authorities.

In 2021, the **National Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration 2021-2025** with the **National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration 2021-2025 (NAP)** and the **Action Plan for Combating Child Trafficking** were adopted as an integral part of the National Strategy.

In 2023, the Government adopted new **Standard operating procedures (SOPs)** for dealing with victims of human trafficking. They generally regulate procedures and ways to provide assistance and protection to all victims of human trafficking and partnership of all involved parties at the local, national and international level. SOPs contains procedures for identification and referral, coordinated assistance and support, resocialization and reintegration of trafficking victims.

According to the "preparation for resocialization and reintegration" measure, reintegration of trafficking victims is supported during their stay in the Center for Victims of Human Trafficking. Guidelines are provided for a continuous reintegration of domestic victims immediately upon their return home, instructing them to contact the competent center for social work. For foreign victims, the preparation for reintegration is carried out 15 days before returning to the country of origin.

A program for reintegration of child victims of human trafficking was prepared in 2014 in accordance with the National Strategy and the Action Plan at the time.

4.2. Institutional framework

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, within its competence, pays special attention to identification, helps and supports reintegration of victims of human trafficking, especially of child trafficking victims, as the most vulnerable group in North Macedonia.

The Department for Equal Opportunities in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is also a coordinating office of the National Referral Mechanism. It supports adequate identification, referral, initial assistance and protection of human trafficking victims and child victims, based on the international human rights standards. It coordinates and monitors all activities related to victims and potential victims, including identification and reintegration with the help of 30 centres for social work and the mobile teams.

The Centre for Social Work is a key institution that deals with victims and potential victims of human trafficking and provides them with access to any form of help, support and protection, in cooperation with competent institutions and civil society organisations.

The Ministry of the Interior/ the Unit for the fight against Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking was established to strengthen the institutional framework for combating trafficking in persons. In 2018, the anti-trafficking Task force was established based on a Memorandum concluded with the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecution of Organised Crime and Corruption to enhance investigation and criminal proceedings against traffickers.

Mobile teams for the identification of vulnerable persons, including victims of human trafficking, have been operating since January 2018 with the aim of more efficient and timely identification of individuals belonging to the above groups. This multi-sectoral approach significantly contributes to the proactive identification of trafficking victims and enhances a multi-disciplinary cooperation, monitoring of the reintegration processes and implementation of individual plans for the reintegration of victims of human trafficking.

The state has established two centres for protection of, support of, assistance to and services to victims of human trafficking and migrants, as follows:

The Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings is a state shelter, established in 2011, managed by the licensed civil society organisation "Open Gate/La Strada". It accommodates victims of human trafficking, domestic and foreign citizens issued with a temporary residence.

The reception centre for foreigners is a facility owned by the state, managed by the Ministry of the Interior. It has been operational since 2001. This centre is intended for accommodation of foreign nationals and foreign potential victims of human trafficking. It offers medical assistance, protection, legal advice, psychosocial support and facilitates return of foreign victims.

◆ 5. Analysis results

5.1. Community resources and needs

The analysis of resources and needs of the community was carried out on the basis of data collected through the analysis of national and local laws and by-laws, information available from reports, and websites of the stakeholders. A particularly important source for the preparation of the analysis were the responses of the stakeholders and service providers given in the questionnaires and focus groups.

5.1.1. Overview of the domestic legislative framework that regulates social protection services

The 2019 **Law on Social Protection**¹⁰ defines the scope of preventive and social protection services. Article 67 describes prevention measures against social risks, social problems and mitigation of the consequences of the social problems of citizens. It encourages the establishment of support and self-help

¹⁰ The Law on Social Protection [28.5_zakon_SZ.pdf](#) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

groups in order to prevent social problems. Social prevention measures can be implemented by social protection institutions through cooperation with educational and health care institutions, police stations, local self-government units and other state bodies, legal and natural persons and citizens' associations.

The law sets forth that victims will be **informed and provided with referral services**, professional assistance and support services, counselling services, placement in a small group home, community services, and non-family protection services. It grants the social protection rights and regulates the services available to the beneficiaries, first assessment and referral to other institutions.

Professional help and support services for individuals and families are provided in case of personal or family problems detected during the assessment, planning and evaluation. The beneficiaries' situation **is monitored after the end of the intervention**, with the aim of strengthening their capacities and well-being. The beneficiaries are also provided with a long-term training for independent living and empowered to overcome their social problems.

Counselling services are performed with the aim of preventing, mitigating and overcoming the consequences of social problems of individuals and families. They encompass a preparation for a marriage, a family life, a parenthood, a family planning, the marriage and partners' counselling, the family mediation, a broken family relationship, a psycho-social support for victims of domestic violence and other specialised types of counselling. The above law does not limit the counselling service to specific beneficiaries, but states in broad terms that there can be "other specialized types of counselling". However, the Rulebook on counselling services limits the service only to victims of domestic violence.

Recommendation: Establish a counselling service for victims and potential victims of human trafficking, because this category of beneficiaries needs it.

Services in the community, as defined in Article 119 of the above law, include services of daily and temporary accommodation, resocialisation, rehabilitation, reintegration of the beneficiary, a halfway house with the aim of prevention, care and protection, in order to empower the beneficiaries to continue living in their home or community, and to prevent the need for a non-family protection.

Day care services include daily care, individual activities and the acquisition of work skills, social, cultural and recreational activities, education, social support for the beneficiaries and their families. The beneficiaries of this service are children at risk, people with disabilities, marginalised groups, the elderly and other people with specific social problems. This service can be useful for some victims and potential victims of human trafficking, for whom temporary accommodation in a shelter is not adequate.

Rehabilitation and reintegration services are intended for people with social and health problems. These beneficiaries are provided with psycho-social support, work-occupational therapy, acquisition of skills for work, reintegration and independent living. The beneficiaries encompass children at

risk, marginalized groups, persons with specific social and health problems. So, the service can be used as a community service for children in street situation, children with behavioural problems, addicts who underwent a treatment and victims of human trafficking.

The temporary accommodation service is regulated by the Rulebook on Temporary Service¹¹. The Rulebook is based on Article 106 of the Law on Social Protection. It defines more precisely the manner and scope of social services, norms and standards for providing services, which are prescribed by the competent minister. According to the legislation, the temporary stay is provided for 3 months with a possibility of extension for additional 3 months to a maximum of 1 year.

The Rulebook defines the beneficiary group of the shelter placement service. It includes children without parental care, children in street situation, child victims of abuse, victims of domestic violence, victims of gender-based violence, victims of sexual violence and rape, victims of human trafficking and homeless. The beneficiary can apply for accommodation by himself, or be referred by centres for social work, the police, or the citizens' organisations. The scope of and the needs for the temporary accommodation service are determined through a professional assessment of the beneficiaries' life situation through a direct insight into his living conditions by a social worker. The centre for social work and the service provider meet at least once per month in order to monitor the progress and implementation of the activities defined in the plan. The service provider conducts an evaluation about the beneficiaries' and stakeholders' (partner organizations) satisfaction with the service and submits it to the competent ministry.

The service provider prepares a feasibility study, an annual work plan with goals and activities, a plan for improving working skills and knowledge, information for the general public and for professionals about the provided services. It also provides the beneficiaries' protection protocol, the staff work rules, the house rules and information about the scope of work and provided services. The service provider also has an obligation to keep files and documentation, to report monthly on the total number of beneficiaries, as well as to evaluate the satisfaction with the service. The records include data on age, gender, education, ethnicity, completed activities, the beneficiary's category.

Recommendation: The Institute for Social Activities should define the work program, the way of monitoring the service and its evaluation, in order to ensure the appropriate quality of this service.

A half-way house is support provided to people who previously used non-family care, do not have their own home or conditions for independent living and need a support to prepare for independent living. In addition to persons without parental care, this category includes adults after leaving an educational or resocialisation

¹¹ Правилник за привремен prestoј-социјала 26.04.21 г.pdf (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. gov.mk)

institution, as well as addicts after their treatment and persons with specific social problems, requiring a support for independent living.

Recommendation: This service can provide a long-term support to victims of human trafficking, after leaving the shelter for emergency accommodation.

Non-family protection services provide basic protection. They include accommodation, food, professional help and support, clothing, footwear, health care, etc. The beneficiaries are individuals who cannot live with their own their family. Non-family care services are recognized in the law as: 1. housing with support, 2. placement with another family and 3. placement in an institution.

Housing with support is provided in a separate housing unit with the help of professionals, or other persons. Help and support can be occasional, daily or a 24-hour assistance, depending on the needs of the beneficiary. Beneficiaries are children older than 14 years of age until they finish high school. The aim is to empower them for an independent living and independence. Five to seven individuals without parental care can be placed in the housing unit.

Recommendation: This service can be used for formally or preliminary identified trafficking victims aged 14-19 without adequate parental care, provided that there is no security risk. The Rulebook does not envisage a possibility of housing for victims or potential victims of human trafficking, which makes it difficult to use this service as an option for them. This form of protection can be applied to victims of human trafficking without adequate parental care in the reintegration phase, or if there is a possibility of re-victimisation.

Specialised accommodation provides general care for persons with social problems and is provided by a foster family that has undergone a special training. The beneficiaries of the service are child victims of domestic violence, children at risk, children in conflict with the law.

Recommendation: Specialised accommodation can be an adequate solution to accommodate younger identified and potential victims of human trafficking who lack adequate parental care, provided that there is no security risk.

5.1.2. Program of work with victims of human trafficking in the process of reintegration

In 2014, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy created the Program for the support of adult victims of human trafficking in the reintegration process¹², with forms attached for the professional work. A separate program was created for the support of the child victims of human trafficking¹³. Analyses of the content of these two programs and their comparison with the Rulebook¹⁴ shows that the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings is licensed as a temporary accommodation

¹² Programa_reintegracija_lica (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

¹³ Programa_reintegracija_deca (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

¹⁴ Правилник за привремен престој-социјала 26.04.21 г.pdf (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

service for minors and adult females, while the programs for the reintegration process are intended for persons of both sexes (there are separate programs for adults and minors). The following options of care for children in the process of reintegration are offered: 1. The Reception Centre for Foreigners for adults and children, 2. the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings for urgent care, which should not be used as accommodation in the reintegration phase), and 3. the family (foster and relatives' family options are not specified). The program itself thereby limits other housing options for child victims of human trafficking, e.g., placement in foster families, kinship guardianship, small home communities, supported living, halfway houses, day care services and counselling services. They could represent adequate long-term options, provided that there is no possibility of a safe return to the family due to a security risk, or a lack of parental capacity of the parents/guardians (for minors). The Program and the Rulebook need to be revised and harmonised regarding temporary accommodation due to an inconsistency with respect to the duration and goals of the housing. Since the temporary stay service's goals are the short-term safe accommodation, recovery, care and information, it is necessary to define a special Program of work for children and adults. The service evaluation form should be reviewed, as now it is more related to the satisfaction with the temporary accommodation than with the reintegration support.

Recommendation: The services of counselling, reintegration, resocialization, economic empowerment and accommodation (supported living) for identified and potential victims of human trafficking in the reintegration/integration phase must be licensed.

5.1.3. Review of existing domestic reports, analysis and recommendations

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy prepared a **SWOT analysis**¹⁵ for its strategic plan 2023-2025. The key challenges highlight the following needs: a. further improvement of institutional and non-institutional forms of protection, b. establishment of a system of coordination and exchange of information at the local and national level, c. support from the municipalities and the private sector, with their social services' capacities strengthened, d. increased resources for the implementation of the activities set out in the strategic documents, e. more available data and records, analysis and statistics, and f. improved networking and involvement of relevant ministries and institutions important for the process of joining the European Union.

The risks and challenges identified herein are highly correlated with the challenges of the system observed at national and local level. In particular, professionals state that there is a need for institutional and non-institutional forms of protection for more groups of beneficiaries, such as, adults and children at risk, victims of crimes, especially potential victims of human trafficking, children without adequate parental care, children with educational and social problems

¹⁵ SWOT analysis of the strategic plan of the Ministry of labour and social policy [2023-2025. SWOT MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL POLICY.pdf](#)

and behaviour disorders. Social services for housing and services in the community need to be developed. There is insufficient exchange of information at horizontal and vertical level between institutions and different service providers. The turnover in the mobile teams affects the record keeping and results in a loss of some data. The lack of financial resources to establish and maintain the necessary housing and community services represents yet another challenge.

5.1.4. Current data on social protection of children, young people and adults

According to the data of the State Bureau of Statistics, for 84 municipalities in North Macedonia there are 30 inter-municipal centres for social work with 1,230 employees, with 45.45% professionals from the social field. Of that number, 327 are social workers, 130 lawyers, 90 psychologists, 59 pedagogues, 47 sociologists, 36 special pedagogues, 48 economists, 6 speech therapists and 459 others.

According to the 2021 Social protection publication¹⁶ during 2022, a total of 49,889 adults and 15,256 children used social protection services. There is no information on the number of professionals trained to work with child and adult victims of human trafficking and to conduct forensically sensitive interviews. Information collected from the field confirmed that only a part of the engaged professional deals with human trafficking. This has also been confirmed by the 2022 TIP¹⁷ report for North Macedonia. It states that in all 30 inter-municipal centres for social work there is only one employee dealing with human trafficking. During the interviews, professionals stated that there was a high turnover of staff. The staff in the centres for social work are not motivated to work on this demanding topic for which they are not extra paid. These 30 professionals (2.44% of the total number of employees in the centres for social work) are responsible for identification, information, referral to other types of support, counselling, psycho-social support during accommodation, reintegration and repatriation of trafficking victims, in addition to their daily work with other beneficiaries. Information was lacking about whether all professionals are trained on carrying assessments in human trafficking cases, on conducting forensically sensitive interviews, on planning activities, on counselling of persons with trauma and with socio-educational problems, or of the ones participating in criminal proceedings as witnesses-victims.

16 Државен завод за статистика - публикација: Социјална заштита на деца, млади и возрасни лица, 2021 (stat.gov.mk)

17 Извештај за трговија со луѓе за 2022 година - Амбасада на САД во Северна Македонија (usembassy.gov)

Minor beneficiaries of social welfare by categories in 2022	
Children lacking parental care	986
Marriage and family problems	4 370
Children at risk	1 735
Children in conflict with the law	2 054
Totally blind persons	143
Totally deaf persons	140
Persons with sound, speech and language disorders	120
Persons with physical disability	905
Persons with intellectual disability	1 337
Autism	228
Persons with combined disabilities	1 037

Table 2. Minors-beneficiaries of social welfare in 2022, by categories

In 2022, there is a large number of children using social protection services (15,256 children), 986 are without parental care, 1,735 are recognized as children at risk, 2,054 are in conflict with the law, 1,337 are with intellectual disabilities and 4,370 are registered as beneficiaries of services due to marital, or family problems. In the same year, there were 49,889 registered adults and elderly beneficiaries of social protection. According to the official data for children's accommodation, in the entire country there are only 4 institutions for the accommodation of children (with a total capacity of 119 persons) registered. None of them provides the service of a temporary accommodation for children, where their filtering can be carried out according to their category, and they can be referred to services in the community, or placed in an accommodation. There are 40 accommodation institutions for adults and the elderly, with a capacity of 2,008 people.

Information gathered from the field stresses the need for urgent and temporary care of children at various risks. However, none of the existing institutions/organisations provide this type of service. As professionals state, this service is important for safe accommodation, recovery, stabilisation of the child, but also for making a good assessment of the possibilities for a long-term care (return to the family, return to the family with support/corrective measures, placement in a foster family, or some other type of alternative care). At the moment, urgent placement of children in the temporary stay service is possible in the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, where 5 children currently reside, some staying there for over a year.

5.1.5. Existing analyses on the treatment and protection of child victims of violence in the social protection system

According to the data collected and analysed by the Institute for Social Activities from Skopje¹⁸, which relate to the treatment and protection of victims of

18 АНАЛИЗА (zsd.gov.mk)

violence in the social protection system in 2021, 358 child victims were recorded (55% female and 45% male). Children aged 6-14 comprise 61% and stand out as the most vulnerable to violence. Next vulnerable categories of neglect and abuse are children aged 6-10 years (28%) and children aged 11-14 years (33%). Out of the total number of registered children, 41 children were victims of neglect, 52 of physical abuse, 135 of emotional abuse, 87 of sexual abuse and 43 of other types of violence. The statistics are not divided by the type of criminal offense and there is no record about the child trafficking victims.

A measure of corrective supervision over parental responsibilities was imposed in 70 cases (19.55%). Only in 13 cases (3.63%) an intersectoral team for treatment and protection was summoned. The individual work plans for beneficiaries in most of the cases contain only general activities, which are insufficiently adapted to the individual needs of beneficiaries. The first interview with the victims is usually carried out by an employee of the centres for social work, who may still be needing additional training and knowledge.

The key recommendations of the analysis point out the need for a quick and efficient action by the centres for social work in terms of applying adequate measures tailored to the children's needs, a mandatory imposition of corrective supervision over parental responsibilities, regular meetings of the interdisciplinary team in cases of abuse and violence against children, an establishment of a safe house for child victims/witnesses of violence - Barnahus in order to ensure a comprehensive protection of child victims of violence by the relevant institutions and sectors. This analysis does not provide separate set of data on the child potential, or identified victims of human trafficking, as well as on the unaccompanied migrant children - beneficiaries of social protection.

Information obtained from the focus groups, questionnaires, interviews shows that there are no or there are insufficient services for child victims of neglect, violence, human trafficking, sexual offenses. Professionals agree that there is a lack of services for the accommodation of child victims/witness. In particular, there is a lack of specialized services for this group to ensure their short-term safe accommodation and recovery, but also to prepare for starting the process of their long-term reintegration/integration into the community, of a timely inclusion in education and of making decisions about their long-term care (when return to their family is not possible).

The term "risk to the safety of the child" is not understood equally by all stakeholders, as children whose safety is not threatened by traffickers, but by their family situation (inadequate capacity of parents to care for, neglect and abuse of children), or children with education and social problems, and behavioural disorders are all kept in the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, for a long time. According to professionals, this happens due to the impossibility to find an alternative care, that is when the children's guardians cannot find another accommodation (e.g., a refusal for admission in another institutions, or foster care). In these situations, the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings becomes children's long-term accommodation, instead of an urgent temporary

accommodation that ensures safety, stabilisation and recovery of the child due to the traumatic experience and threatened security, as well as a preparation to find a long-term solution. The nature of this service is such that it limits children’s movement, communication, continuation of regular schooling, play, socialising with peers, which consequently cannot provide adequate preparation for an independent living. In parallel, keeping for a long-term the child victims in the urgent, temporary accommodation takes up valuable capacities for accommodation of identified and potential trafficking victims.

Recommendation: It is necessary to clearly separate emergency accommodation services and accommodation in the reintegration phase, as well as draw up separate support programs to clearly define the standards and support that are accessible in these services. The above will enable to provide a support based on the victims’ needs, as well as, improved monitoring and evaluation of the services’ quality.

5.1.6. Data on accommodation in the institutions

When it comes to the capacity of the social protection system for accommodation of beneficiaries, the capacities of the institutions for housing adults and the elderly are far greater (40 institutions with 2,008 places) in comparison to only 4 institutions, which are housing children (3 institutions with 80 places and 1 with 39).

Institutions for social welfare in 2022¹⁹		
	Number of institutions	Number of recipients
Institutions for children and juveniles lacking parental care	3	80
Institutions for children and juveniles with educational and social difficulties	1	39
Institutions for adults	40	2 008
Institutions for care of persons with disabilities	3	253

Table 3. Institutions for social welfare in 2022

In 2022, a total of 25,408 services were provided to a total of 11,715 child beneficiaries of the social welfare system. 950 children were placed in foster families, 123 children were given for adoption, 731 children received the right to material support, 196 children received other types of support, while 8,567 children received other services of the social protection system.

¹⁹ 2.1.23.23_mk.pdf (stat.gov.mk)

Beneficiaries	Services of social welfare for children in 2022.							
	Total	Foster care	Adoption	Placement in families and institutions	Right to social financial assistance	Other assistance	Other services of social welfare	Total
children lacking parental care	2,725	547	123	767	211	-	1,077	3,398
marriage and family problems	1,142	108	-	15	1	-	1,018	5,322
children at risk	1,029	55	-	99	-	12	863	2,299
children in conflict with the law	774	53	-	5	1	-	715	1,977
children with visual impairment	347	15	-	3	3	1	325	450
children with hearing impairment	86	20	-	1	3	-	62	212
children with voice and speech disorders	104	10	-	4	-	-	90	273
children with physical disabilities	318	50	-	29	6	41	192	751
children with intellectual disabilities	501	20	-	119	9	33	320	812
autism	154	9	-	19	-	2	124	421
children with combined disabilities	698	63	-	77	-	-	558	1,455
others	3,837	-	-	10	497	107	3,223	8,038
Total	11,715	950	123	1,148	731	196	8,567	25,408

Table 4. Service of social welfare for children in 2022

5.1.7. Children with educational and social problems and behavioural disorders

In its 2022 annual report on the Public institution for care of children with educational and social problems and behavioural disorders²⁰, the Institute for social states that there are 5 work units in this institution, as follows: Service for community living of children with educational and social problems and behavioural disorders (5 organizational units); Service for common living of children with behavioural disorders (2 organizational units); Service - Reception Centre for Children in Street Situation; Service for carrying out educational activities with children with behavioural problems; and Department for administrative and supporting technical work. Compared to 2020, in 2021 the number of employees in this institution was reduced by 7.

During 2022, there were a total of 27 children housed, 9 who completed the service, and 4 new ones admitted to the service (3 without parental care, 1 child at risk). At the end of the year, the work continued with 17 children.

20 [ГОДИШЕН-ИЗВЕШТАЈ-3А-ЈУЗДВСПНП-2022.docx \(live.com\)](#)

This report informs that there are 66 employees in the institution, 41 who are care professionals from the humanitarian field, 7 who are employed to support education, and a health care worker. The report states that the child trafficking victims have been accommodated. There were also children registered for using the accommodation, who actually left.

According to the data collected in the field (questionnaires, interviews), a process of deinstitutionalization was carried out a few years ago, and children who were accommodated in large institutions are now housed in small group homes. The process requires more community integrated facilities where professionals provide accommodation for children similar to living in a family. The state rents several facilities, but a greater number of employees of various professions is needed to tend to children 24/7. Although this proved to be a form of protection that is more suitable to children, it requires more financial and professional resources. In this type of services, there are far more employees than beneficiaries (66 employees for 10 facilities for which the payment of overhead costs should be ensured in total for 27 children). According to professionals, there are no adequate services for children to prevent the recognised risks of educational and social problems, behavioural disorders, and conflicts with the law. These children are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of various forms of exploitation and child trafficking. According to data obtained in the field, due to a reduced number of employees, two group homes were closed.

5.1.8. Care in foster families

Currently, there are 3 foster care centres in the country, 329 foster families and a total of 574 children in foster care²¹. 105 foster families are managed by the Centre for Support of Foster Families "Bitola", 62 by the Centre for Support of Foster Families "SOS Children's Village" and 152 foster families by the Centre for Support of Foster Families "11 October". According to the available data, the average number of children placed in a foster family is 1.74. In 2022, for a placement of a child, the state allocated from the budget from 11,249 denars per month (placing a child in general foster care where there are 5 children), to 18,147 denars (placement of the child in a specialised foster care).

According to data obtained during the field visit, there is a total of 2 foster families that have received training for the placement of child victims of human trafficking. However, the motivation of foster parents to take care of children with this type of risk is low, considering the child's need for substantial support by the foster parents and the system. Moreover, these children also participate in criminal proceedings. Therefore, they need additional specialised treatments (psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, etc.). At the moment, only one child victim of human trafficking is in a placement. She has been waiting for this accommodation for more than 4 years and will soon turn 18. There is no data on the structure of children placed in foster families by category.

21 [Како да станете згрижувач - Згрижување \(zgrizuvanje.mk\)](#)

Recommendation: This type of accommodation would be appropriate for younger child trafficking victims, without adequate parental care and without symptoms and behaviours that foster parents, who are not professionals, could not deal with.

5.1.9. Daily temporary stay service

According to data obtained from the registry of licensed services of the social protection system²², two service providers for children in street situation (24+24 beneficiaries) are registered in the territory of the city of Skopje. No information was obtained about the involvement of these two service providers in the prevention of human trafficking, identification of potential victims and their referral to other services. The providers of this service are not part of the Skopje mobile team.

5.1.10. Counselling services for families at risk (children and parents)

There is a community service in Skopje for families with children at risk²³. It is managed by the service provider “SOS Children's Village”. The aim of this service is to strengthen parental capacities and keep children in the family. Beneficiaries are families where the parents are with a low parental competence, and children and young people have poorly developed skills, inadequate behaviour and low social competence. Currently, 60 families from the territories of the municipalities of Šuto Orizari (the service is licensed for 178 beneficiaries/family members) and Gazi Baba (licensed for 177 beneficiaries) are included in this service. According to the service provider, the existing capacities are not used sufficiently. This service can be useful in many ways to better prevent the risk of human trafficking, as well as return children to their parents, or relatives. There is a plan to extend this service to the territory of the municipality of Strumica in 2024, and to the territory of the municipality of Kavadarci in 2025. The service is in the registry of licensed social protection services.²⁴

Recommendation: The service provider is not part of the Skopje mobile team. Considering the importance of this service for prevention and for a later support in the integration, it is recommended to be included in the mobile teams.

5.1.11. Supported housing service

The service “Living with support” is registered in the territory of Skopje and provided by the registered service provider “SOS Children's Village”²⁵. In each of the 4 facilities, 7 young people aged 14-19 are accommodated, in 28 persons. According to the data obtained, there are no victims of human trafficking among the registered beneficiaries. In the field, there is no information that any of the

22 REGISTAR.jpg (2148x7729) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

23 Советувалиште за деца и семејства - СОС Детско село (sos.org.mk)

24 REGISTAR.jpg (2148x7729) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

25 REGISTAR.jpg (2148x7729) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

professionals, including the provider of this service, has identified potential victims of human trafficking as potential beneficiaries of this service.

5.1.12. Data on specialised services for victims of human trafficking

The National Commission for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration of North Macedonia issues annual reports²⁶. Between 2018-2022, the reports show that a large number of domestic and foreign citizens were in a process of identification. **Seventy-eight persons were identified as victims.** During the identification process, a large number of persons were preliminarily identified as **potential victims of human trafficking** (239 persons in total). Mobile teams and other professionals also came into contact with many persons belonging to various **vulnerable categories** (226 persons in total).

5.1.13. Temporary accommodation services for victims of human trafficking

The Centre for Victims of Trafficking of Human Beings is one of the non-institutional social protection service. It is located in Skopje, as the capital city, where other necessary services for victims of human trafficking are concentrated, and the investigation and prosecution bodies for human trafficking crimes are located.

In accordance with the Law on Social Protection, the Centre started working as a constituent unit of the Inter-Municipal Centre for Social Work in Skopje, since February 2011. Currently, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy provides space, covers the utilities' costs and pays for the accommodation of beneficiaries (the approximate amount is 500 euros per beneficiary, per month). The Ministry of Labour and Social Services hires the civil society organization "Otvorena porta/La Strada", a licensed service provider, to provide this professional service.

"Otvorena porta/La Strada" is a civil society organisation, with many years of experience working with victims of human trafficking. It has been running a shelter for victims of human trafficking since 2005. It hires experts from various professions, who have special knowledge in the field of human trafficking and victims' support.

In accordance with the Rulebook²⁷, the service provider hires at least four specialised professionals. There must be a social worker, a pedagogue and a psychologist with special knowledge for working with victims of human trafficking. Article 30 of this Rulebook states that there should be a maximum of 4 beds in a bedroom, with at least 5m² per user. Article 31 stipulates that there should be no more than 3 beds placed in the bedrooms, with natural light. The children should be accommodated separately from adults. The Rulebook stipulates that the space should have two entrances/exits. Although the service is registered for

²⁶ Годишни извештаи на Националната Комисија - Национална Комисија (nacionalnakomisija.gov.mk)

²⁷ Правилник за привремен престој-социјала 26.04.21 г..pdf (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

10 beneficiaries²⁸, the accommodation can only host 6 beneficiaries (at one point, the maximum number of 8 beneficiaries was accommodated). The Rulebook does not define the minimum and maximum age of persons in accommodation, as well as whether it is possible to accommodate mothers with children.

According to the Analysis on the functioning of the Centre for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking²⁹ in 2015, 4 people who stayed there in average for 7 days. In 2016, a single person was accommodated for 21 days. In 2017, a single person was accommodated for 7 days.

After numerous trainings of representatives of mobile teams and the National Referral Mechanism, the number of identified and potential victims of human trafficking, increased significantly, which in turn increased the need for their accommodation.

Accommodation 2018-2022							
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total No	Average No
Total	9	10	7	7	9	42	8.4
<i>Girls</i>	8	8	7	6	9	38	7.6
<i>Women</i>	1	2	0	1	0	4	0.8
New beneficiaries	9	6	3	4	6	28	5.6
<i>Girls</i>	8	4	4	3	6	25	5
<i>Women</i>	1	2	0	1	0	4	0.8

Table 5. Accommodation in the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings between 2018 and 2022

From 2018 to 2022, the number of beneficiaries in the accommodation has increased as follows: 7-10 beneficiaries were accommodated annually, 6-9 of were girls and 0-2 of were women. 3-9 new beneficiaries were accommodated annually. Despite the fact that the accommodation capacity is 6, and the duration of the service is 0-3 months, in one case there was no place to accommodate a potential beneficiary.

5.1.14. Analysis of the duration of the accommodation and of the reasons to stay

From 2015 to 2017, the average duration of the beneficiaries' accommodation was between 7-21 days. Since 2018, when the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy began to finance the service, and the mobile teams to preliminarily identify more potential victims, the numbers of identified and potential victims of human trafficking increased significantly, as well as the length of their stay in the accommodation. From 2018 until 2022, out of a total of 28 victims accommodated in the Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking, 17 were potential victims (14 children and 3 adults), while 11 were identified victims (10 children and 1 adult).

28 REGISTAR.jpg (2148x7729) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

29 Анализа за функционирање на ЦЖТ, ИОМ, 2018 година.

The largest number of accommodated victims (17) stayed in the accommodation for up to 3 months, 3 children (2 potential and 1 victim) stayed in the accommodation between 3 and 6 months. Neither there was a need for the extension of the latter's stay, nor the police assessed that there was a security threat. The reason for their longer stay was rather the inability of the centre for social work to find an alternative accommodation. 8 children (6 victims and 2 potential victims) had to stay in the shelter for victims of human trafficking for more than 6 months, although they did not need to and the police did not find any security risks, only because the social protection system could not find an alternative accommodation. From the field, there was information that some child victims stayed in the Centre for more than 4 years due to a lack of alternative accommodation. Of particular concern is the fact that this service (due to its aim) is closed, with a limited possibility for outdoor activities, taking walks and communication due to the need to ensure the secrecy of the location and safety. During the focus group, police and prosecutor's office representative highlighted this concern. The safety of the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings and its beneficiaries is put at risk, when different types of accommodation services are mixed together, and some beneficiaries are allowed freedom of movement and communication.

Duration of accommodation -and reasons		Accommodation in months (number of beneficiaries)			Reasons for sheltering over 3 or over 6 months (number of beneficiaries)		
		0-3 mth	3 to 6 mth	over 6 mth	Assessment of the Min. of Interior	Assessment of CSW * ³⁰ No other solution for mid-term/ long-term accommodation	Assessment of CSW* Need of the beneficiary
Girls	Victims	3	1	6		7	
	Potential victims	10	2	2		4	
Women	Victims	1					
	Potential victims	3					
Total		17	3	8	0	11	0

Table 6. Duration of accommodation in the Centre for Victims of Trafficking of Human Beings and reasons

5.1.15. Specialized support in the reintegration process

Despite information by almost all mobile teams and social services that the victims' reintegration services take place in the community, there is no single

³⁰ Center for Social Work

licensed service providing such services. The Standard operating procedures³¹ envisage a provision of a primary care after identification of trafficking victims, with the aim to provide for accommodation, food, clothing, psycho-social and counselling support, contacts with the family and the country of origin and medical examinations. The Program for assistance and support in reintegration of victims of human trafficking³² and the Program for assistance and support in reintegration for child victims of human trafficking³³ describe in more detail the legal basis, the areas of support, the method of implementation of the support and provide forms in the attachment. According to the information received, the support in the reintegration is primarily provided by competent experts, who have been trained to work with victims, in cooperation with the mobile team, citizens' organisations and other local institutions.

In the registry of the social protection services, there is no single specialized counselling day service in the community, accommodation service during the reintegration, or resocialisation services for victims and potential victims of human trafficking. Bearing in mind that criminal proceedings can last for years, appropriate support for the participation in criminal proceedings should be provided through community services (psycho-social, legal, practical support for communication with the law enforcement and for attending hearings). Professionals reported that due to a lack of adequate reintegration support service, there was a pressure to prolong the accommodation service in the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. In the focus groups, several practical problems were highlighted that concerned the support of unaccommodated victim-witness during the hearings (psychosocial support and preparation for participating in the procedure, organising transportation, legal aid, etc.).

Recommendation: The Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking can have more organisational units for different services, and therefore, more licensed providers of accommodation and victims' support in the community. All counselling services can be mobile and be available throughout the country.

5.2. Analysis of the target group

Analysis of the target group and their need for support and accommodation was carried out on the basis of available data from the annual reports of the National Commission³⁴, data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the civil society organization "Otvorena Porta" that provides accommodation services³⁵, data obtained from the questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. Due to the complexity of the problem, the target group was analysed from several aspects that is, their needs, strengths and risks to safety and health, which should be dealt with within the accommodation. Due to the need for a better understanding of the identification process and trends, the research

31 SOP Macedonian 16x23.indd (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

32 Programa_reintegracija_lica (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

33 programa_reintegracija_deca (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.gov.mk)

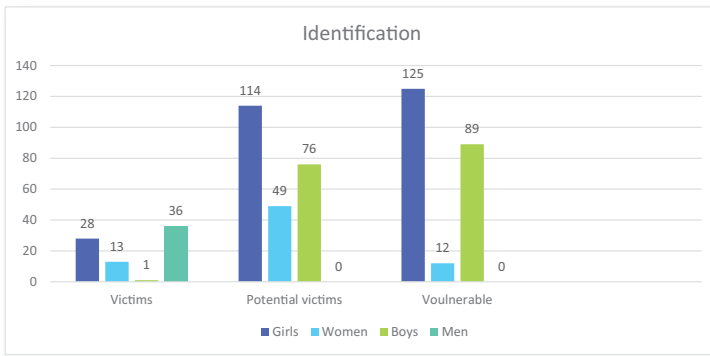
34 Годишни извештаи на Националната Комисија - Национална Комисија (nacionalnakomisija.gov.mk)

35 Ла Страда - Отворена Порта - Ла Страда (lastrada.org.mk)

covered the period 2018-2022.

5.2.1. Analysis of the target group according to the outcome of identification

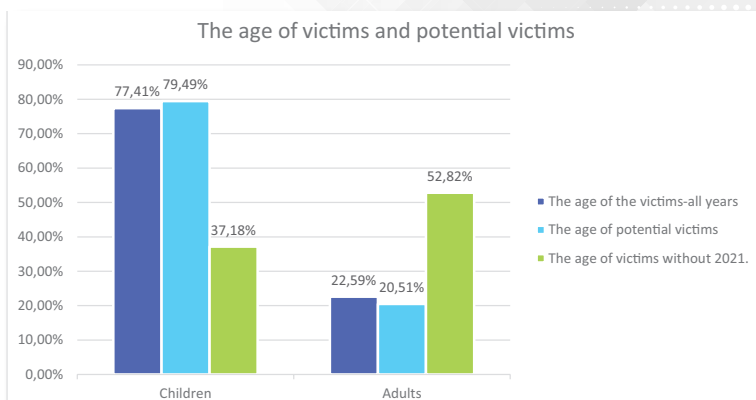
Between 2018-2022, a large number of domestic and foreign citizens were in the process of identification. **One boy, 28 girls, 36 men and 13 women (78 in total) were identified as victims.** During the identification process, a large number of persons were preliminarily identified as the **potential victims of human trafficking**, of which **76 boys, 114 girls and 49 women (239 in total).** Through this process, mobile teams and other professionals came into contact with many children belonging to different **vulnerable categories**, as follows: **89 boys, 125 girls and 12 women (226 in total).**



Graph 1. Numbers of victims, potential victims and vulnerable 2018-2022

5.2.2. Analysis of the target group by age

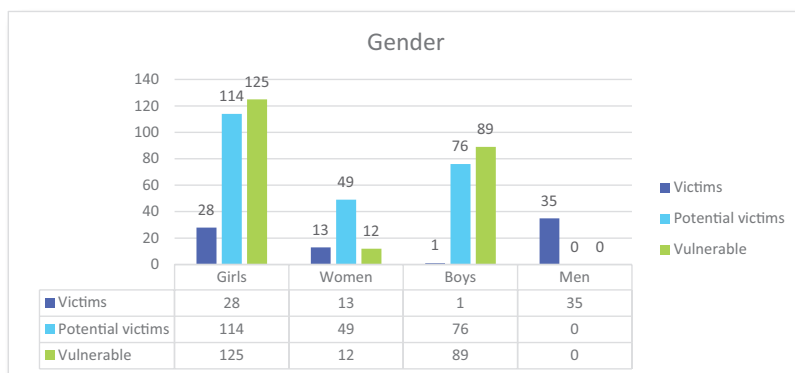
Traffickers in human beings are a predominantly targeting children. Between 2018-2022, **the biggest number of identified victims are child victims** except for 2021, when a large group of victims exploited for their labour was identified. In total, out of 78 identified victims, **49 are adults and 29 are children.** When 2021 is excluded, the statistics change significantly. **77.41% of the identified victims are child victims** (predominantly girls, 95.83%). When the **number of potential victims** is analysed by age, the situation is similar, that is, out of 239 preliminary identified potential victims of human trafficking, **190 are children (79.49%) and 49 are adults (20.51%), all are female victims (100%).**



Graph 2. Numbers of victims, potential victims by age 2018-2022

5.2.3. Analysis of the target group by gender

Data show that females are prevailing among the identified and potential victims in most cases. Among the **41 female victims**, there are 28 girls and 13 women, while there are **36 male victims** (1 boy and 35 men). Without 2021, when a group of men was identified as victims of labour exploitation, the share of **the female population is significantly higher (89% of persons are female)**. Among the **potential victims**, most are girls **114**, then **boys 76**, and **women 49**. Among the **vulnerable groups**, girls **predominate with 125**, followed by boys **76** and women **49**. Although the majority of the target group are females, there is also a large number of males, especially boys.



Graph 3. Number of victims, potential victims and vulnerable individuals by gender 2018-2022

5.2.4. Analysis of the target group according to the need for accommodation

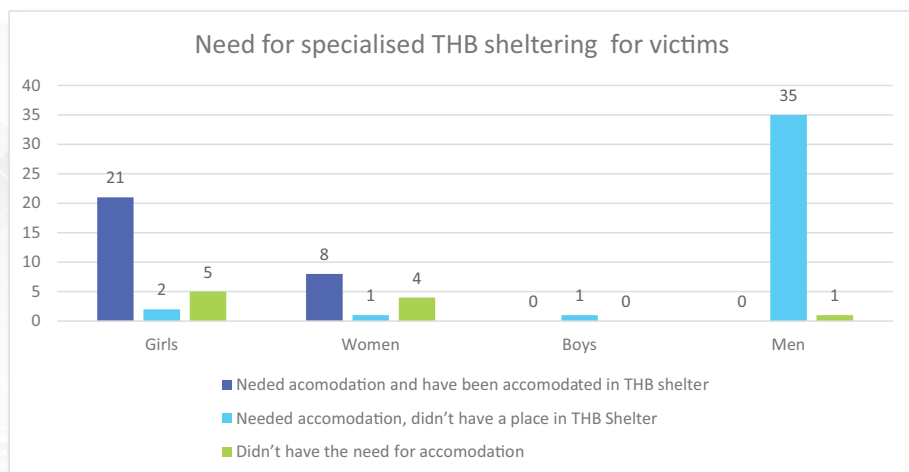
From the data analysis about the needs for accommodation and situations when it was not possible to provide accommodation, it follows that men

exploited for their labour in 2021 were in the biggest need for accommodation for a shortest period of time. Information obtained from the focus groups and interviews, shows that these were foreign citizens wanting to return to their country of origin as soon as possible. Since their accommodation lasted only for a few days, they were accommodated in the Centre for the Accommodation of Foreigners and voluntarily repatriated.

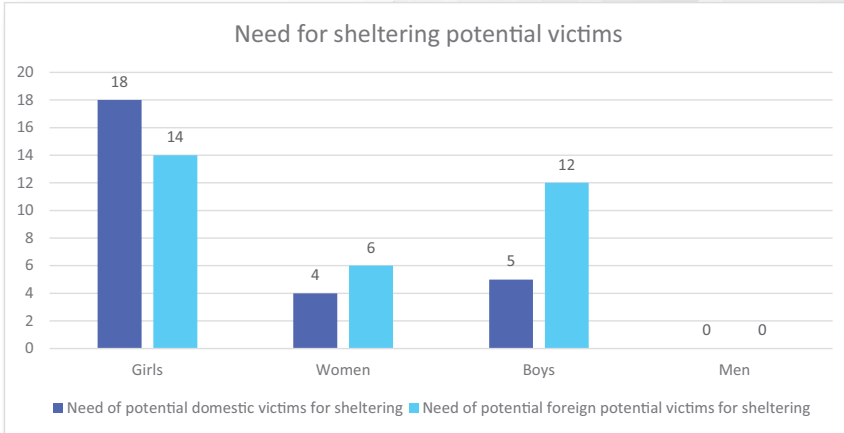
In the rest of the analysed period, it is the minor girls victims of human trafficking who have the greatest need for accommodation (21), then adult female victims of human trafficking (8), and minor boys (1). A total of 4 people were accommodated in an alternative accommodation during that period, while 5 girls, 4 women and an adult man could not be accommodated in the Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking, and an alternative solution was needed.

A large number of people in need of accommodation are potential victims of human trafficking, including 27 domestic citizens (18 girls, 5 boys and 4 women) and 32 foreign citizens, mostly minor migrants. All migrants were accommodated in the Centre for Reception of Foreigners.

The above data indicate **that minors and adult females are most often in need of accommodation**. The above also indicate that there **is a large number of children at risk who need an accommodation**. On one hand, considering the low number of accommodation facilities for children in the whole country, it is not surprising that there is a large number of requests for admission of children to the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. On the other hand, a longer stay of victims in the accommodation service (some child victims stayed in the accommodation for up to four years) makes it difficult for the admission of other persons, when need it.



Graph 4. Number of victims in need of accommodation by age and gender 2018-2022



Graph 5. Number of potential victims by age and gender that needed accommodation 2018-2022

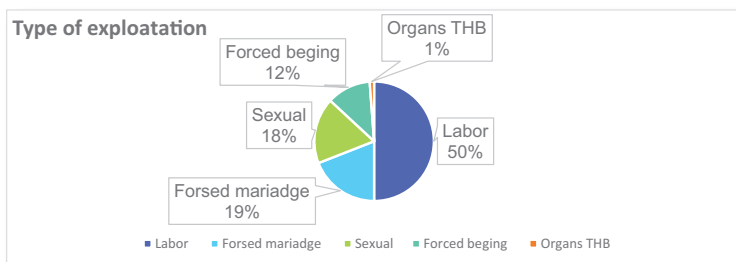
5.2.5. Analysis of the target group according to the type of exploitation

The data from the annual reports of the National Commission and the 2023 GRETA report show that the main form of exploitation of the identified victims was labour exploitation (42), followed by sexual exploitation (15), forced marriage (13), forced begging (3) and a combination of forced marriage and sexual and/or labour exploitation (4).

Sexual exploitation is most often carried out in restaurants, bars and nightclubs in the western part of the country. Labour exploitation occurs in the above facilities as well as in agriculture, construction, textiles, animal husbandry and the cleaning sector. Most victims of human trafficking are children from dysfunctional families with a plethora of risk factors, including domestic violence and poor social and economic conditions.

Most children identified as potential victims of trafficking by mobile teams are children from the Roma community subjected to forced begging, forced marriage, or sexual exploitation.





Graph 6. Percentage of victims by type of exploitation 2018-2022

5.2.6. Overview of specific needs according to gender, age, type of exploitation and the need for accommodation or other types of support

Data on the analysis of the number and structure of the target group according to age, gender, type of exploitation, need for services indicate that a large share of the victims of human trafficking are children and females, predominantly exploited for forced marriage, for sexual services, or for begging. Periodically, a larger group of male persons is identified for labour exploitation, and there was a migrant victim of trafficking in body parts.

The assessment of the need for child protection is largely determined by the assessment of the provided support by their parents or guardians. Children who do not have or have inadequate parental care are in a much more difficult situation and at greater risk than children supported by parents/guardians. This is why there is a need not only for a short-term accommodation due to the situation of human trafficking and compromised security, but also for a long-term care in alternative care and a need to monitor the exercise of parental rights for those who return to their families. Bearing in mind the types of exploitation and the way of life they were exposed to (a street situation without adequate parental care and positive educational influences, begging, forced marriages, sexual exploitation) in addition to the need to be cared for and provided with accommodation, food and protection, the victims often require a long-term intensive treatment of resocialization, medical services, integration in the educational system and establishment of positive models of behaviour, as they struggle with behavioural problems and a low level of socialization. The treatment generally requires a long-term care of the child, with potential risks for his re-victimisation due to insufficient personal, family and social skills and self-protection. For this reason, most of these children, after leaving the shelter, manifest again risky behaviours that put them at a risk of human trafficking, or some other form of abuse. This situation requires complex mechanisms of specialized support, which is not only aimed at safe accommodation, but a whole series of interventions to overcome the traumatic experience, including intensive work on re-establishing/establishing positive models of behaviour, life habits, stable interpersonal relationships in a safe and secure environment, which is also stimulating the development of a child or a young person.

Recommendations regarding child support:

There must be a specially created program to work with children. It should be implemented by professionals who have knowledge and skills to work with children with trauma, but also with children who have educational, behavioural and social problems. It is also important that these professionals have adequate knowledge and experience in working with children who, as victims-witnesses, participate in criminal proceedings for human trafficking, and that they adequately prepare, monitor, support and protect them throughout this process. In addition to the need for safe care, the child needs protection of his health and educational rights and interests, adequate relations with peers and family (when it is certain that they do not participate in exploitation) and participation in social life in accordance with the child's capabilities.

All support intended for the child victim must be in accordance with his age. This is why the team working with children should include professionals who know the specifics of the developmental stages of children, and the service should respond to these needs. It is very important to assess the moment when the child can be included in the education system, especially if the child stays in the shelter for longer than 15 days, and security and the medical-psychological reasons do not disrupt inclusion in regular schooling. Information and professional interventions for children must be in a language that the child understands (mother tongue adapted to the age). When it comes to a migrant child, there should be an interpretation service available for the key activities (at least an online interpretation), as well as a risk assessment and preparation for repatriation, when safe and possible.

It is necessary to have bigger involvement of the health and educational system, and of other available social protection services that can support recovery and prepare the child for reintegration. It is also important to trigger monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the provision of this service in order to assess its quality.

When it comes to **female adults**, they are most often exploited through forced marriage, forced prostitution, labour and begging. They often come from a population exposed to poverty, violence, low education, stigmatised and discriminated against, lacking adequate social and family network of protection and support, and sometimes with some physical and mental health problems. The above makes the recovery from trauma difficult and slows down the process of reintegration or integration. Therefore, care requires long-term and complex interventions, while it may bring repeated risks for the victims, sometimes even their revictimization.

In 5 years, there were 4 women in accommodation (1 victim and 3 potential victims) all them stayed there for less than 3 months. The collected data indicate that the emergency accommodation support, so far, was provided in accordance with the defined duration of this service. However, the support for this category of beneficiaries can and should be continued in the local community.

Recommendations regarding organising support for females:

Due to the most present types of exploitation and the common characteristics of victims, the support during the emergency accommodation service (in addition to support for recovery, stabilisation, healing from trauma, meeting basic medical needs, accommodation and nutrition) should also prepare the female trafficking victims for the support process after the emergency accommodation, that is, to stimulate a long-term recovery, independent living and improving self-protection skills against re-victimisation.

Thus, it is important to establish other services in the community, such as counselling, day care, living with support, support in resocialisation, legal and psycho-social support for participation in criminal proceedings, economic empowerment and employment programs.

There are organisations with many years of experience, working with female victims of human trafficking, as well as gender-based forms of violence. They can significantly contribute to the establishment and development of various services, and thus enabling a long-term empowerment of female victims of human trafficking following urgent care. When persons who cannot adequately take care of themselves (people with disability) are concerned, it is necessary to make appropriate assessments of their capacity to protect their legal rights and interests and of their need to be protected in adequate way (accommodation in institutions for adults and the elderly).

Man are predominantly victims of labour exploitation, with a single identified victim of human trafficking for his body parts. Until now, the victims were mainly foreign victims, rarely domestic victims. Labour exploitation victims often prefer to contact and return to their family in their country of origin as soon as possible. They rarely request an accommodation. According to the existing regulations, these persons are accommodated in the Centre for the Reception of Foreigners. There they neither have freedom of movement, nor a professional psycho-social or legal support.

Recommendations regarding the support provided to men:

There is a need to establish an emergency accommodation for male victims of human trafficking, The capacities would accommodate male identified and potential domestic and foreign victims. The accommodation for foreign victims and their residence status for humanitarian reasons would be organised in accordance with the police's approval. Foreign victims should also have a reflection period, where they can receive a range of support (psycho-social, accommodation, legal aid, etc.). Afterwards they can make an informed decision about their participation in the criminal proceedings, as well as about returning to the country of origin.

When it comes to domestic adult male victims of human trafficking, due to the nature of personal, social and family characteristics, during their stay in an emergency shelter, support should be focused on recovery, information about

their rights and preparation for reintegration/integration and independent living. If it concerns persons who are unable to adequately take care of themselves and need a support from their family, disabled persons, it is necessary to check if they have the capacity to protect their own interests and legal rights. If not, then appropriate decisions should be made about their further protection (accommodation for adults and the elderly, appointment of guardians). All types of reintegration support can be carried out further through the services recommended for females as well.

The establishment of counselling, community services and supported living services would enable support services to become available to male domestic citizens who do not want accommodation, as well as to those who are leaving emergency shelters. The foreign male adults should also have available translation (minimum online).

◆ 6. Conclusions and recommendations

Findings: The Law on Social Protection foresees various services that can be provided to victims of human trafficking, or to families and individuals with social problems. These services can adequately respond in line with international standards and recommendations, but they are not fully used. The regulations more closely define the general and structural standards for these services and explicitly state that victims of human trafficking can be beneficiaries of the service for a temporary stay accommodation. Other regulations do not explicitly mention victims of human trafficking as the possible beneficiaries of the services. Professionals from the system of social protection and criminal prosecution currently recognise only the shelter service provided by the Center for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings as an option for the trafficking victims. The reintegration services are assessed as weak and insufficiently developed. There is an impression they have not been consistently used.

Currently, the state shelter (The Center for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings) functions in partnership with the civil society organisation „Otvorena porta/La Strada“, the licensed service provider. Only girls aged 10 to 18 and adult women are admitted to the service. While the Centre is licensed for a total of 10 beneficiaries, it can only accommodate 6 beneficiaries. There is no specialized temporary accommodation service for child and adult male victims of human trafficking. Boys are placed in other forms of child care, while adult men (mostly foreign nationals, victims of labor exploitation) are placed in the Reception Center for Foreigners for a short period of time, and voluntarily repatriated. A greater need for accommodation occurs occasionally. The collected data show that beneficiaries need this type of service for up to three months. Afterwards there is a need to provide a different type of support aimed at reintegration/integration. Due to a lack of other services, beneficiaries stay longer in a temporary accommodation, because there are no alternative services in the community that would stimulate the reintegration/integration process.

The existing regulation for a temporary stay in accommodation defines general standards, location, equipment and personnel, but does not have a service program. Therefore, it cannot be clearly assessed, if the intended goals are achieved. Due to unclear framework, the existing service is not used adequately (beneficiaries stay in the service significantly longer, which does not particularly correspond to the interests and needs of children) and there is no adequate monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the service provided. There are programs that define professional work in the reintegration process (separately for children and adults). However, they have not been revised and adapted to the current situation. Their implementation is not well monitored at the local and national level through statistics and reporting.

Direct recommendations on the service of temporary accommodation for victims of human trafficking

Direct recommendations: Establish a sustainable emergency shelter service for victims of human trafficking, for all categories of beneficiaries (children, women and men), for domestic and foreign citizens, in a scope that can meet the projected needs by type of service:

1. **Emergency accommodation for children victims of human trafficking and potential victims of human trafficking up to the age of 18** with a capacity of 6 boys + 6 girls. The children will be accommodated in emergency situations, will be safe and cared for during identification, recovery, stabilisation and assessment for the long-term form of support/care (return to the child's family, placement in foster care, or other form of alternative care).

a) The service of emergency accommodation for children is recommended to be provided by a public institution that has a license and expertise with the services for children. Placement in this service should last 0-3 months, with the longest stay up to 6 months, upon the assessment and opinions of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, when the child's safety is at risk.

It is necessary to ensure that the centres for social work apply the case management methodology in these cases. The centre for social work provides the service provider with information about the case and the collected data, no later than 3 days after the victim's placement, and orally before/during her placement. The centre for social work with the service provider jointly define the initial individual work plan with tasks, responsibilities, and activities that the latter will perform with the child.

In the first month, the task of the centre for social work is to make an assessment of the role of the parents in the situation of human trafficking and their capacity to protect the rights and interests of the child. Based on that assessment, further protection of the child is planned. It encompasses preparations for return to his family of origin,

or a form of long-term alternative care. If it is a child of foreign citizens, a repatriation is planned if safe. Inclusion in the educational process, psycho-social support, etc are also planned. Afterwards, the centre for social work provides the service provider with a precise direction about a further protection of the child. In the next 2 months, the service provider works on the child's recovery, but also participates in the planning of the long-term form of protection (reintegration/integration/repatriation).

b) The structural minimum standards for this service are provided, as follows: The bedroom with no more than 3 beds with a size of at least 15 m². There should be also other rooms, as described (a living room, a dining room, a room for professional work with victims), entrances, corridors, hallways, stairs, toilets, bathrooms, administrative space and kitchen.

The standard for a facility for children can be higher than the minimum in every respect, in order to respond to the specific needs of this target group. Accommodation for children should be bright and spacious - a minimum of 4 bedrooms with a maximum of 3 beneficiaries each, divided based on gender. The beneficiaries of the same gender from 2 rooms can share a bathroom. In 2 rooms (per gender) there can be a common space for living and common activities with corridors and halls. Children's meals can be organized in the common dining room with the food prepared in a common kitchen. For the entire facility, it is necessary to have a larger room for group work and group activities, which should be of at least 30m², as well as a room for employees of at least of 20m² and a room for individual counseling of at least 12m². Each child should have his own bed (on one level, not on the top), his own wardrobe and a bedside table. It is important that the facility where children are accommodated is a courtyard house, with two entrances and exits, with a normal fence, integrated with the surrounding with an alarm-panic button (24 hours connected with police).

The yard should be of at least 4,000 m² with the space for rest, recreation and children's play (green area, play and socialising area, outside of the seating area). It is recommended that the building be close to a health care facility for primary care, an elementary school, and the police. It is desirable that the room for the group work and the room for individual counseling/or administrative work are connected and technically equipped. The "Barnahus" methodology can be applied in perspective (Barnahus is a child-friendly, multidisciplinary and inter-agency model for responding to violence against children and child witnesses). The purpose of Barnahus is to offer a child-friendly coordinated and effective response for protection and documentation during criminal proceedings. It should also prevent trauma and re-traumatization during pre-trial and trial proceedings. In the above facility, a forensically sensitive interview (FSI) can be conducted by a specially trained professional for conducting FSI with children, which can

be also audio-video recorded and used in criminal proceedings.

c) The public institution Centre for Social Work Skopje should supervise the quality of the service and its impact on the beneficiaries, as this institution monitors the work of the local centres for social work and the service provider. On an annual level, it is recommended that the evaluation of the work is not carried out by the service provider, as it would not provide an objective assessment of the quality of the service provided. The evaluation should be carried out by the supervisor, who would provide recommendations for improvement to be submitted to the Institute for Social Activities and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Institute for Social Activities should be included in the preparation of the work program, the assessment of the quality of the service, the development of the service and delivery of trainings, in accordance with its competences.

2. **Emergency accommodation for women and girls over the age of 16** with accommodation capacity for 6 people for safe care in the process of identification, recovery, stabilisation and preparation for the process of reintegration, integration, or repatriation. Accommodation in this service can last 0-3 months. Afterwards the beneficiary is referred to other services. The service for women should be compatible with the service for children. So, when the behavior of an individual victim may be unsafe or inappropriate for other accommodated victims, as well as when the capacity in the emergency accommodation for children is full, children may be also accommodated here.

This accommodation model can provide additional accommodation capacities for young people aged 16-18, if there is an increased need for accommodation. When it comes to women over 65, it is necessary to consider whether their current needs (upon the opinion of the centre for social work, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Ministry of the Interior) are better met in an institution for the elderly, or in the Center for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. Emergency accommodation for women can be provided by public or private service providers in accordance with regulations.

It is recommended to provide special accommodation for this target group, preferably a house with a courtyard. In accordance with the standards, it should have 2 bedrooms (specific needs for rest and recovery of beneficiaries with trauma) with two beds (beds on one level, not on a floor). It should also have a smaller housing unit, a studio apartment, which could be used for isolation purposes in case of infectious diseases, or as a reception room for beneficiaries with behavioral problems, addiction to psychoactive substances, health or mental problems and may be a threat to other beneficiaries. When necessary, a pregnant women, or a mother with children can be accommodated there, too. The studio apartment should have a suitable furniture for babies (a crib,

a bathtub, a changing pad, a high chair, a sterilizer for bottles).

a) It is important that the accommodation facility is a house with a courtyard, with two entrances and exits, a normal fence, blending with a surrounding and with alarm-panic button. In the yard, there should be at least 4 areas for rest, recreation and occupational activities (green area, recreation and socializing area, outside seating area). It is recommended that the facility be situated in a vicinity of a health care center, primary school and a police station. It would be desirable for the service provider to establish other daily and counseling services in the community, as well as housing services in the reintegration phase (supported living). So, in periods when there are no, or there are fewer victims in the shelter, the specialised staff, with already established relationship of trust with the beneficiaries could continue providing them with support via other services.

b) The Public Institution Centre for Social Work Skopje (or another public institution hosting an emergency accommodation service) should monitor the quality of the service and its impact on the beneficiaries, as it is charged with a supervision of the local competent centres for social work and the service provider. On an annual level, in order to obtain an objective evaluation of the quality of service, it is recommended that the evaluation of work is performed by the supervisor, which will submit it to the Institute for Social Activities and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy with recommendations for improvement. It is important that the Institute for Social Activities is included in the development of the work program, the assessment of the quality of the service, the development of the service and the delivery of the trainings, in accordance with its competences.

3. **Emergency accommodation for men and boys over 16 years of age**, with accommodation capacity for up to 6 people for safe accommodation in the process of identification, recovery, stabilisation and preparation for the process of reintegration, integration or repatriation. Accommodation can last 0-3 months, afterwards the beneficiary is referred to other services. The service for adult males should be compatible with the service for boys. When behavior of an identified or potential victim may be unsafe or inappropriate for children placed in the Emergency Children's Accommodation, or when the accommodation capacity for children is full, they can be accommodated there.

This accommodation model can also provide accommodation for young people aged 16-18 when there is a need for additional accommodation. When it comes to persons with disabilities, or men over 65, it should be considered, upon the opinion of the centre for social work, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Ministry of Internal Affairs,) whether they should be placed in an institution for elderly or in the Center for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. The emergency accommodation for male

victims over 16 years of age can be provided by public or private service providers in accordance with the regulations.

It is recommended to have a separate shelter, a house with a courtyard. In accordance with the standards, the shelter shall have 2 bedrooms (specific needs for rest and recovery of beneficiaries with trauma) with a maximum of two beds per room (beds in one level, not on a floor). It should also have a smaller housing unit, a studio apartment, within the shelter. It could be used for isolation purposes in case of infectious diseases, as a reception room for a beneficiary with behavioral problems, addiction to psychoactive substances, or health or mental problems that may pose a risk to other beneficiaries.

a) The facility where the beneficiaries are accommodated should be a house with a courtyard, with two entrances and exits, with a normal fence, blended with the surrounding, with an alarm-panic button. In the yard, there should be at least 4 areas for rest, recreation and occupational activities (green area, recreation and socializing area, outside seating area). It is recommended that the facility is located in a vicinity of a health care facility for primary care and the police station. It would be desirable for the service provider to establish other daily and counseling services in the community, as well as housing services in the reintegration phase (supported living). So, when there are no, or there are few victims placed in an accommodation, the specialised staff with already built relationship of trust with beneficiaries can continue working on their support through other services.

b) The Public Institution Centre for Social Work Skopje (or another centre for social work hosting the urgent accommodation) should monitor the quality of the service and the impact it has on the beneficiaries of the accommodation, as it supervises the work of the involved local centre for social work and the service provider. On annual level, the evaluation of the work should not be performed by the service provider, but by the supervisor, in order to have an objective quality assessment with recommendations for improvement, to be submitted to the Institute for Social Activities and the competent ministry. It is important that the Institute for Social Activities is included in the development of the work program and the quality assessment of the service, their development and delivery of trainings, in accordance with its competences.

4. There are limited financial (material) and specialized professional resources for working with victims of human trafficking and child victims. If due to financial constraints, the facilities for accommodation of different categories of beneficiaries are located on the same plot of land, the shelters for different categories of beneficiaries must be **physically and visually separated from one another**, put on **different floors with separate entrances**, so that beneficiaries would not mix. If there are common facilities for a group work, it is necessary to clearly

define the terms under which each beneficiary group would use them. If the premises of a beneficiary group are empty (this may occasionally happen, especially for adult male persons), they can be used, if needed to accommodate another beneficiary group.

The facility for children should be physically completely separated from the facility for adults. The proposed capacity for accommodation should not be reduced in any case, but it can only go higher. This is due to the great need for accommodation of children and to the vulnerability of the child victims. It is necessary to apply all the recommendations regarding accommodation for child victims and potential victims of human trafficking. If the recommendations (recommendation 2. and recommendation 3.) cannot be fully implemented, there are several possible, less financially demanding solutions:

First, there can be 5 bedrooms (three for women and two for men) in a single house (two separate parts of the house or different floors), with two or three beds each. There should be a common space for living, cooking, bathrooms and space for advisory and administrative work. If necessary, this accommodation could be used for female identified and potential victims, when there are no male identified or potential victims accommodated, or for young identified or potential victims over 16, when children's accommodation is full.

Second, there can be accommodation for adults (women and men) in one shelter with separate sleeping rooms and bathrooms, with shared living and premises for administrative and individual psychosocial support. In that case, it is necessary to provide at least three rooms with two or three beds each with a total capacity of 9 adult identified victims and potential victims.

Third, financially the most cost-effective option is to provide accommodation with 2 rooms 3 beds each for female adults. Separate apartment(s) can be rented for male adults, if necessary. There the service provider will provide a psycho- social, administrative and legal support through licensed services, which could also be available to foreigners staying in the Reception center for foreigners.

5. A work program defining clear professional standards for the emergency accommodation service (functional standards), should be developed, so that the purpose is fully achieved (urgent, safe accommodation for identified and potential victims of human trafficking who need recovery, nutrition, clothing, information, medical services, psycho-social support, legal advice, representation, preparation for the process of repatriation, reintegration or integration). An objective evaluation to assess the quality of the service should be provided. The Program for service should be developed under the lead of the Institute for Social Activities and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and based on examples of

good practice from other countries. It should not be left to the service provider to develop, monitor and evaluate the programme.

6. In addition to the key purpose (safe accommodation for children, their recovery and stabilization) the Program for service of children in emergency accommodation, must enable the beneficiaries to enjoy the rights of the child and meet their needs (socialization/resocialization, inclusion in the regular education system, play, interaction with peers, stimulating environment for growth and development, etc.). Therefore, the accommodation should have space for outdoor play and activities, rooms for indoor group activities, educational materials, toys, social games, etc. An important component of this program should be work on the resocialization/socialisation of children, because the data indicate that children are socially deprived, have not developed protective patterns of behavior, are excluded from the educational system, and are lacking adequate parental care and support.
7. An adequate safety standard should be in place in the shelters in accordance with international standards, as recommended by the representatives of the criminal justice and the social protection system, tailored to the beneficiaries' needs. The facility should be in a populated area, blending with the surrounding. It should have at least two entrances, a video surveillance, an alarm system (a panic button with 24 hours monitoring) and swift police reaction. The shelter should be built as a 2-story house (a ground and a first floor). It should not have bars or a high fence that would stand out from the surroundings, or any other features that would indicate it as an enclosed space.
8. In order to ensure the safety of beneficiaries, the location of the shelter must be kept secret. The house rules, the rules of conduct for beneficiaries, the code of conduct for employees must be clearly defined. There must be clear procedures for dealing with security threats. Only licenced employees, working in the shelter can have access. Any unauthorized entry of other persons (without the approval of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Interior) shall be considered a violation of the safety rules. It is necessary to clearly define the security procedures for reception of beneficiaries, for going out and for communications to ensure the safety of the shelter and the beneficiaries. Protocols on cooperation with relevant institutions and organisations involved in support should be drafted.
9. The shelter(s) must have all the necessary infrastructure (an asphalted driveway, electricity, water, sewage, communication installations for the internet, telephone, heating installations). The facility should have access to public transport with connections to other parts of the city, should be close to schools, health care institutions and the police so that access to other services in the community is ensured.

10. According to the opinion of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the accommodation service can be integrated with other similar services, for more cost-effective use of human resources. The emergency accommodation for the child identified or potential victims can be provided by another provider of accommodation services for children, provided that it abides by the Ministry's standards and only for this category of beneficiaries. As a special service, the emergency accommodation can license a day care services for children, counseling services, assisted living services, etc. The accommodation service for adults can be integrated with other similar specialised services for adults (day services in the community, supported living, counseling services, etc.).

Indirect recommendations

Indirect recommendations refer to other circumstances and services that affect, or may affect the emergency accommodation service for identified or potential victims of human trafficking. There is a need to develop preventive, advisory, daily services in the local community and revise existing regulations and programs, so that these services could be licensed and implemented with quality in the entire territory.

Recommendation 1 Establish a counseling service for identified victims and potential victims of human trafficking. They need this service in all phases of providing support (in the phase of identification, information about rights and services, emergency accommodation, psycho-social support, reintegration, participation in criminal proceedings, repatriation). This service can be available to a larger number of identified and potential victims of human trafficking. This service can provide a greater scope of support, a wider coverage of the territory, as well as support for foreigners.

Recommendation 2. Provide better mapping and link the existing licensed services with possible service providers. For example, different service providers, that is small group homes for children with educational and social problems, providers of accommodation in foster families, counseling services for families and children, day care services can be represented in the Skopje mobile team.

Recommendation 3. Establish specialised day services in the community (day care services for identified and potential victims of human trafficking, services for resocialisation and reintegration). When this type of service is licenced, the services for identified and potential victims will become available to persons who do not need accommodation, or who due to the nature of their educational and social problems (e.g., begging, committing crimes, taking drugs, prostituting themselves, etc.). They may more easily accept the dynamics of daily services in their local community where the reintegration or integration takes place. Daily

services should include a variety of individually adapted educational, advisory, social, cultural and recreational activities, including vocational education. With the social support provided, they will be empowered to live independently.

Recommendation 4. Establish a "supported living" service for victims of human trafficking in the phase of reintegration and preparation for independent living. Beneficiaries who are not at risk, but need support to become independent, are provided with free housing, food and the necessary professional support (as assessed). This service costs much less than the emergency accommodation service, and allows the victim who does not need a 24-hour professional support to gradually establish independence and become economically empowered. The service can be provided through a rental of apartments for the beneficiaries, where they would live and receive counseling support. To establish this service, the relevant by-laws should be amended and the upper age limit for the victims abolished.

Recommendation 5. Specialised care in foster families is a service that can and should be used for the child victims of human trafficking, whose safety is not threatened and/or who have gone through a period of stabilisation and recovery in the emergency shelter. It is necessary to organize additional tailored trainings for the service providers and foster parents to provide specialised support to the child victims.

Recommendation 6. It is necessary to continue the training of professionals who provide services to the general population of vulnerable groups of children (homeless, in street situations, without parental care, with educational and social problems, in conflict with the law) in order to expand their knowledge and skills to work with children exposed to exploitation, abuse, etc. It is also necessary to deliver a training on the topic of children's participation in criminal proceedings, protection of their rights and interests, and cooperation with criminal prosecution authorities.

Recommendation 7. Clear procedures should be issued on supporting victim-witnesses for her participation in criminal proceedings, that is, for a psycho-social preparation, when giving a testimony, when heard by the court, when requesting a compensation.

Recommendation 8. The range of possible service providers in the community and their sustainable financing, through licensing and training should be expended.

Recommendation 9. Professional training on working with victims of human trafficking, interviewing identified and potential victims, advisory support should be organised for all employed professionals in the centers for social work and social services. More professionals should be seconded to work with victims of human trafficking.

Recommendation 10. An emergency accommodation service for children without parental or adequate parental care, children in street situations, etc. should be established. It should have a filtering role, in order to ensure a better assessment of the needs for further interventions, return of the child to the family or placement in alternative care (foster care, small group community, etc.).

Recommendation 11. Adequate technical conditions for audio-video documentation of the statements of victim-witness in criminal proceedings should be in place, so that the testimonies can be used in the judicial proceedings to avoid secondary victimisation.

Recommendation 12. A forensic system for the psycho-physical condition of the identified or potential victim for the purposes of criminal proceedings should be established with enhanced planning of the necessary support for participation in criminal proceedings.

Recommendation 13. The methodology of monitoring data from the social protection system and other state services that collect statistics with data on the number of identified victims of human trafficking and the number and types of social support provided to them, should be improved.

Recommendation 14. Services in the community, as well as accommodation services, should be available to foreign citizens. In this sense, it is important to define a way so that foreign victims, without documents, with special approval from the Ministry of Interior, could use the emergency accommodation for victims of human trafficking. For this purpose, foreign victims/potential victims of human trafficking need to be provided with a minimal online translation in all phases of support (information, professional interventions, testimony, assessment, planning, etc.). It is important that a fully informed foreign identified or potential victim makes a decision on whether he would be supported in the Center for the Reception of Foreigners or in the Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking in Human Beings.

Recommendation 15. To be cost-effective, specialised services for identified and potential victims of human trafficking can be provided in an integrated manner, which enables greater availability of services, better utilisation of human and financial resources, specialisation of anti-trafficking interventions, flexibility in responding to current trends and the structure of beneficiaries according to their number, gender, age, etc.

Conclusion

There is a need to expand the service for trafficking victims not only to accommodate more beneficiaries, but also to widen its scope and provide a variety of services to different categories of trafficking victims of all ages, citizenships, genders. A better connection with other services in the community can be established with more consistent application of programs and thus, making the service availability to more potential beneficiaries.

The service with minor adjustments (previously described in the recommendations) is feasible and can be legally and financially sustainable. Establishing a variety of other services in the community will reduce the pressure on the emergency accommodation service for beneficiaries who need different types of support. This will give improved access to quality services to the trafficking victims at a lower cost.

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