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G R E T A

Group of Experts on Action
against Trafficking in Human Beings

GRETA(2023)11_SVK_rep

**Reply from the Slovak Republic
to the Questionnaire
for the evaluation of the implementation
of the Council of Europe Convention on Action
against Trafficking in Human Beings
by the Slovak Republic**

Fourth evaluation round

Thematic focus: Addressing vulnerabilities to trafficking in human beings

Reply submitted on 2 November 2023

Adopted by the Group of Experts on Action against
Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) on 30 June 2023

Introduction

In accordance with Article 38, paragraph 1, of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (“the Convention”), GRETA evaluates the implementation of the Convention following a procedure divided into rounds. At the beginning of each round, GRETA selects the specific provisions on which the evaluation procedure is based.

The first round of monitoring of the Convention provided an overview of its implementation by States Parties. The second evaluation round of the Convention examined the impact of legislative, policy and practical measures on the prevention of trafficking in human beings (THB), the protection of the rights of victims of trafficking, and the prosecution of traffickers, paying particular attention to measures taken to address new trends in human trafficking, in particular trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, and the vulnerability of children to trafficking. The third evaluation round focused on trafficking victims’ access to justice and effective remedies.

GRETA has decided that the fourth evaluation round of the Convention will focus on **vulnerabilities to human trafficking** and measures taken by States Parties to prevent them, detect and support vulnerable victims, and punish the offenders. This includes a focus on the use of information and communication technology (ICT), which brings structural changes to the way offenders operate and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities.¹

A number of provisions of the Convention establishing substantive and procedural obligations are relevant to this topic. The concept of “vulnerability” appears in Articles 4 (definitions), 5 (prevention of trafficking in human beings) and 12 (assistance to victims) of the Convention. According to paragraph 83 of the Explanatory report to the Convention, “by abuse of a position of vulnerability is meant abuse of any situation in which the person involved has no real and acceptable alternative to submitting to the abuse. The vulnerability may be of any kind, whether physical, psychological, emotional, family-related, social or economic. The situation might, for example, involve insecurity or illegality of the victim’s administrative status, economic dependence or fragile health. In short, the situation can be any state of hardship in which a human being is impelled to accept being exploited. Persons abusing such a situation flagrantly infringe human rights and violate human dignity and integrity, which no one can validly renounce.”

GRETA refers to the ICAT Issue Brief No. 12/2022 on Addressing vulnerability to trafficking in persons which refers to vulnerability as “those inherent, environmental or contextual factors that increase the susceptibility of an individual or group to being trafficked”. It classifies vulnerability factors in three categories: personal (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, disability), situational (e.g. destitution, unemployment, legal status) and contextual (e.g. discriminatory laws, policies and social norms, armed conflicts, crises) factors, which interact and may increase the risk of human trafficking for certain individuals, groups and/or communities.² Vulnerability to human trafficking is also subject to intersectional factors, such as gender, belonging to a minority group and socio-economic status.

Applying a socio-ecological approach to the analysis of vulnerability to human trafficking demonstrates how different risk factors influence vulnerability, and how protective factors may reduce the risk of victimisation by increasing resilience.³ The socio-ecological model considers the complex

¹ [Paolo Campana, Online and Technology-Facilitated Trafficking in Human Beings, Council of Europe, April 2022.](#)

² [ICAT Issue Brief No. 12 on Addressing vulnerability to trafficking in persons - Search \(bing.com\)](#)

³ https://www.avoiceforcentraloregon.com/uploads/1/3/9/9/139904528/socio_ecological_model_and_trafficking.pdf

interplay between individual, relationship, community and societal factors. It helps to understand how anti-trafficking strategies should: (a) reduce the vulnerability of individuals, (b) work with the communities (which may also include relationships) concerned to ensure that their practices or current dynamics do not exacerbate or contribute to vulnerabilities to human trafficking and, (c) change a number of system-driven or structural elements (such as policies) so that they do not facilitate but discourage an environment conducive to human trafficking.

In addition to the thematic focus on vulnerabilities to human trafficking, GRETA has decided that each State Party will receive **country-specific follow-up questions** related to recommendations not implemented or partially implemented after the third evaluation round.

States Parties are requested to transmit to GRETA a reply to this questionnaire **within four months** from the date it was sent. The reply to the questionnaire should be submitted in one of the official languages of the Council of Europe (English and French), and preferably also in the original language. Where appropriate, in order to avoid unnecessary repetition, the reply may refer to information contained in the report submitted by the national authorities on measures taken to comply with the Committee of the Parties' recommendation concerning the implementation of the proposals made in GRETA's third evaluation report. States Parties should provide links, copies or extracts of relevant legislation, regulations, national action plans and case law mentioned in the reply to the questionnaire, in the original language and, wherever possible, also in one of the official languages of the Council of Europe.

A variety of stakeholders and civil society representatives should be effectively consulted in the preparation of the reply to the questionnaire, to ensure that the information provided is as comprehensive as possible.

Part 1 – Addressing vulnerabilities to trafficking in human beings

I. PREVENTION (Articles 5, 6 and 7)

1. Do you have specific data/research/analysis of what makes people vulnerable to trafficking in human beings (THB) in your country? Please provide information on the categories/groups of people identified as being at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking, and how they are addressed in the national anti-trafficking strategy and/or action plan. Have you identified geographical regions or economic sectors in your country as particularly vulnerable to THB, and how do you address them in your strategy or policy?

Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “Ministry of Interior”):

Within the meaning of Article 19 of 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, the Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and for Crime Prevention of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “IC MI SR”) fulfils the role of a national rapporteur or equivalent mechanism. The national rapporteur or equivalent mechanism carries out in particular assessments of trends in trafficking in human beings, the measuring of results of anti-trafficking actions, including the gathering of statistics in close cooperation with relevant civil society organisations active in this field, and reporting to the European Commission. For this reason, as a national rapporteur or equivalent mechanism and as the coordinator of a specialised support and protection programme for victims of trafficking in human beings (hereinafter referred to as the “Assistance Programme”), the IC MI SR has for the sixth consecutive year prepared a Situation Report on the Fight against THB in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “SR”), the last one being for the year 2022. The Situation Report on the Fight against THB in the SR is based on available statistical data, daily practice in assisting victims of THB, cooperation with the specialised unit of the Police Force, the National Unit of Fight against Illegal Migration of the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Presidium of the Police Force (hereinafter referred to as the “NUFIM BBFP P PF”) and various state and non-state entities involved in the fight against THB, such as the Slovak Catholic Charity (hereinafter referred to as “SCC”) - the entity implementing the Assistance Programme and the operator of the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818, in accordance with the contract for the provision of services concluded with the Ministry of Interior. It is operated by the SCC and serves to provide professional help to victims of THB as quickly as possible, to report suspected THB, but also as a form of prevention, where people can ask for advice and information e.g. before travelling abroad. The helpline is operated by the SCC as follows: on weekdays, people can call the helpline for advice from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., outside working hours, there is continuous monitoring of incoming calls via an answering machine.

The evaluation of statistical data is based on partial statistics of the IC MI SR, NUFIM BBFP P PF, General Prosecutor’s Office of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “General Prosecutor’s Office”), non-governmental sector. For the Ministry of Interior, the annual processing of the Situation Report on the Fight against THB in the SR also follows from Task No. 1 of the “Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019 - 2023” (hereinafter referred to as the “Action Plan”), which is part of the “National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019 - 2023” (hereinafter referred to as the “National Programme”) approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic by Resolution No. 495/2018. The IC MI SR further elaborated an analysis of the judgments of the courts of the Slovak Republic for the years 2015 - 2020 and also an analysis on labour exploitation, the intention of which was to contribute to the improvement of the process of detection and investigation of the crime of THB and to provide insight into the issue of THB for the purpose of

labour exploitation and violation of the provisions of Act No. 311/2001 Coll., Labour Code, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Labour Code”), with the aim of defining the boundaries between the THB for the purpose of forced labour and poor working conditions. The above materials are published on the website of the Ministry of Interior: <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality>.

Based on published information for the field of combating THB and information provided by cooperating actors in the field, it can be concluded that perpetrators of THB always take advantage of the vulnerability of their victims or their trust. Although there is no clear profile of a victim of THB, it is still the case that the most vulnerable group is people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In the Slovak context, this means more victims from areas with high unemployment and from socially disadvantaged communities, with the majority of victims having lower levels of education. When looking at the categories or groups of persons identified as being at risk of becoming victims of THB, it can be noted that this risk has long been identified among members of marginalised communities (due to illiteracy or low education, unemployment, dependence on the social assistance system, use of psychotropic substances) and other vulnerable persons, including children after leaving the welfare system, homeless persons, persons with both physical and mental disabilities, youth and adults with addictive substance use disorders, and migrant workers. During the period under review, major challenges and crises, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian aggression against Ukraine, also had a negative impact on the level of vulnerability of people to exploitation. Despite the massive movement of persons from Ukraine through our territory, or persons who decided to stay on the territory of the SR, we have not recorded a formally identified victim of a THB crime within this group of persons.

In relation to the origin of the identified victims of THB, it can be noted that the majority of them were Slovak citizens in the assessment period, while the number of foreigners was relatively low.

In terms of identifying the geographical region, it can be noted that the dominant region of origin of THB victims within the SR from 2017 to the end of 2022 is the Košice Region, which is located in the east of Slovakia. Most of the victims enrolled in the Assistance Programme in the period under review were from municipalities. In the context of Brexit, there has been a noticeable decrease in the number of identified victims of THB in the form of labour exploitation in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which has so far been the priority country for labour exploitation of Slovak victims. The current trend is to move activities closer to the borders of the SR, e.g. to Germany.

There is a persistent trend in the Slovak Republic where men are victims of labour exploitation and women, including girls, are the most frequent victims of sexual exploitation and forced marriages. We perceive the modus operandi of forced marriages as a form of trafficking in human beings on two levels. The first is the forced marriage of adult women for the purpose of legalising the residence of third-country nationals in the European Union (hereinafter referred to as the “EU”), and the second is the forced marriage of persons under the age of 18, according to the traditions of certain population groups, which originates in marginalised communities. We registered a trend of predominantly male victims enrolled in the Assistance Programme from 2015 to 2021, with the exception of 2019, when more females than males were enrolled in the Assistance Programme. In 2020, there was a balance between male and female enrolments. In 2022, there was again a change in the mix of victims, with a predominance of female victims enrolled in the Assistance Programme.

In 2020, child victims accounted for a quarter of the total number of identified victims in the SR and in 2021 for almost a third of all identified victims. In 2022, the SR returned in the number of identified child victims of THB to the 2019 data, where almost one in six identified victims of THB was a child (i.e. 10 out of 58). We see the reduction in the number of identified child victims in 2022 as a positive development also following the awareness-raising activities implemented, however, protection measures targeting potential child victims need to continue to be given due attention and the cooperation of authorities that can identify and come into contact with child victims needs to be improved.

In terms of age, there is a long-term trend that almost exclusively adults enter the Assistance Programme. A child's entry into the Assistance Programme is subject to the consent of the legal guardian and, in addition, the situation of a child victim of a crime, including THB, in terms of protection measures, is preferably dealt with by the social and legal protection of children and social guardianship authority (hereinafter referred to as the "SLPCSG") in order to pursue the child's best interests.

Trends in the fight against THB are one of the important considerations in policy-making in this area. The necessary changes and challenges are reflected in particular in the composition of the tasks included in the National Programme for 2019-2023. National Programmes are adopted in the SR for several years, the most recent being the National Programme for 2019-2023. This is the fifth national programme on THB issues. It contains 4 main areas covering comprehensively the area of combating THB - partnership, prevention, victim protection and prosecution. Key trends towards a satisfactory comprehensive solution can be identified in each individual area. The activities carried out for the implementation of the National Programme for 2019-2023 are financially covered by the State Budget of the SR. The material also includes a plan of tasks in the form of an action plan, which in 21 tasks reflects the needs of practice and international standards. The evaluation of the implementation of the measures set out in the Action Plan is discussed annually by the inter-ministerial Expert Group on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (hereinafter referred to as the "Expert Group"), established at the Ministry of Interior. A comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of the tasks of the National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings for the entire period for which the National Programme is developed is part of the deliberations of the Government of the SR. The National Programme for 2024-2028, currently under preparation, focuses on the creation of effective tools for early identification, effective protection and assistance to victims, successful prosecution of perpetrators and the imposition of just punishment, as well as on the harmonisation of structures and procedures for referral of victims to support systems. These are problematic areas that deserve increased attention. The material also includes an Action Plan for 2024 to 2028. It consists of 19 measures. For example, it is proposed to establish a national contact point for referring victims, to deepen international police cooperation, and to improve and streamline the collection of statistical indicators on THB. It is also intended to adjust the level of the sentencing tariff for the basic and qualified body of the crime of THB in order to minimise the use of the possibility of extraordinary reduction of imprisonment in the imposition of suspended prison sentences, as well as to create opportunities for effective compensation for victims. The material was submitted to the Government of the SR on 18 October 2023 and approved by Resolution No. 522/2023.

2. What specific measures are taken to reduce children's vulnerability to THB by creating a protective environment for children? Please provide information in the following areas:

- a. protecting children's rights from attitudes, customs, behaviour and practices that can have an adverse effect (including child, early and forced marriage, and illegal adoption);

Ministry of Interior:

In 2022, the IC MI SR implemented a nationwide awareness-raising activity in cooperation with the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (hereinafter referred to as the "CLSAF") and the Presidium of the Police Force for children from the Centres for Children and Families (hereinafter referred to as the "CCF") throughout the territory of the SR. Police preventionists and the IC MI SR held 60 meetings with the participation of nearly 900 children and young adults from 6 – 17 June 2022. During 2022, the IC MI SR provided media interviews based on demand and filled the Facebook page dedicated to THB issues, which serves as one of the tools for communication with the public (<https://www.facebook.com/obchodovaniesludmi/>).

In 2022, the IC MI SR and NUFIM BBFP P PF cooperated in organising three trainings under the leadership of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities (hereinafter referred to as the “OGPRC”) for members of local civil order services in the Prešov and Košice regions on the topic of THB.

In order to improve the protection, support and assistance to victims of crime and other antisocial activities, the Ministry of Interior has established information offices for victims of crime (hereinafter referred to as “Information Offices”). The task of the Information Offices is to provide information to victims within the scope of the right to information provided for by a special regulation and to provide victims with professional assistance. The Information Offices also cooperate and exchange information with intervention centres, with entities providing assistance to victims of crime and other antisocial activities, with social service providers and with public authorities, and carry out activities to promote awareness-raising for the protection of victims. The Information Offices are also accessible to youth victims, and if the employees identify a case of a child’s interest being endangered in the course of their work, they draw the attention of the competent SLPCSG authority to these facts (Article 7 of Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on the SLPCSG and on the amendment to certain acts).

In 2022, the Ministry of Interior cooperated with the OGPRC in the preparation of a bilingual information material (leaflet) focusing on forced marriages, the victims of which are primarily minors. The OGPRC assisted in the translation of the information material into the Roma language. In April and May 2023, a social media campaign on the information material was run on the websites of the Ministry of Interior, Crime Prevention and the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. The information material is published on the website of the Ministry of Interior: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=nutene-sobase-stale-nie-su-u-nas-minulostou-obetami-su-aj-12-rocne-deti>.

On 21 June 2023, the Ministry of Interior departments and the SCC collaborated on an online training on THB, with a focus on forced marriage, conducted by OGPRC. The training was attended by 53 OGPRC employees, primarily from the Project Implementation Department and the Regional Coordination Department.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family”):

Activities organised at the local level in cooperation with the National Coordination Centre for the Protection of Children from Violence are focused on the customs and traditions of the Roma community for representatives of entities working with clients of this community, with the aim of preventing, for example, forced marriages of minor girls and raising the legal awareness of the target group, especially the parents of children, pointing out the criminal responsibility of such actions.

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport”):

The reduction of children’s vulnerability in general is also addressed in Directive No. 36/2018 on the prevention and treatment of bullying of children and pupils in schools and educational institutions - <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/16073.pdf> and the Action Plan to Tackle Bullying in Schools and Educational Institutions 2022 - 2023 <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/21853.pdf>.

Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “Ministry of Health”)

Measures taken on the subject at the Ministry of Health are included in the materials: National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Violence, Childhood without Violence for All Children (2023-2029) and Action Plan based on the National Strategy for the Protection of Children from

Violence, Childhood without Violence for All Children (2023-2026). The National Concept for the Protection of Children in the Digital Space and the Action Plan for the National Concept for the Protection of Children in the Digital Space, which was approved by Government Resolution No. 382 of 8 June 2022 <https://detstvobeznasilia.gov.sk/dokumenty/strategicke-materialy#dokumenty>.

Child Guarantee National Action Plan of the SR with a view to 2030, which was approved by the Government of the SR by Resolution No. 156/2023 on 12 April 2023 <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/27971/1>.

The draft Action Plan for the years 2023-2025 to the National Strategy for the Development of Coordinated Early Intervention and Early Care Services 2022-2030 was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic by Resolution No. 244/2023 on 24 May 2023 [Detail materiálu | Portal OV \(gov.sk\)](#).

OGPRC:

The OGPRC implements several **national projects - Field social work and field work in municipalities with the presence of marginalised Roma communities** (hereinafter referred to as “MRC”) **II, Community services in towns and municipalities with the presence of MRC - Phase II, Support for pre-primary education of children from MRC II – PRIM II**. Funding is provided through the Operational Programme Human Resources under Priority Axis 5, which focuses on the integration of MRC. The beneficiary of the national projects is the Government Office of the Slovak Republic and the implementer of the national projects is the OGPRC.

The outputs of the national projects Field Social Work and Community Services serve as the basis for the National Project Field Social Work and Community Centres, which will be implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the new programming period 2021-2027. The outputs of the national PRIM project serve as a basis for the national POP 3 project, which will be implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport in the new programming period 2021-2027. The aim of these national projects is professional work on an individual level, as well as work with families, with a focus on MRC. The interventions implemented are aimed at empowering individuals, strengthening their competences and skills, sensitising public opinion and improving the quality of life of individuals and families.

The national project Field social work and field work in municipalities with the presence of MRC is published on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/narodny-projekt-terenna-socialna-praca-a-terenna-praca-v-obciach-s-pritomnostou-marginalizovanych-romskych-komunit-ii/>

The national project Community services in towns and municipalities with the presence of MRC is published on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/komunitne-sluzby-v-mestach-a-obciach-s-pritomnostou-marginalizovanych-romskych-komunit-ii-faza/>

The national project Support for pre-primary education of children from MRC - the aim of the project was to get as many children from Roma communities as possible into kindergartens (hereinafter referred to as “KGs”). In a number of KGs involved out of 150 locations, until the beginning of the PRIM II project, there were never any children from Roma communities or there were only children from fully integrated families. Compulsory pre-primary education for five year old children was introduced with effect from September 2021. The second aim of the project was to bring support measures to KGs in order to ensure the rapid integration of children from Roma communities into mixed KG collectives (by introducing the positions of special educator and parental assistant and by creating inclusive teams from pedagogical and professional teams of KGs). The outputs of the project included approximately 11,000 children who completed at least 1 school year in pre-primary education; in 133 schools, establishment of inclusive teams using innovative approaches; validation and start-up of the position of parental assistants, coming directly from the participating communities; and the development of a special stimulation program for 3-4 year old children to eliminate cognitive

deficits and a methodology for working with the family, both with a focus on the environment of MRC. The national project PRIM II has brought about a more targeted provision of material support; improved attendance of children from the MRC environment; increased parental confidence in the environment and function of KGs; creation of space and capacity for systematic work with children on an individual basis; introduction of incentive programmes for the purpose of increasing children's potential; introduction of intensive work with the family through the position of parental assistants with a favourable impact on the assumption of parental responsibility; employment of people from the MRC background and support for teachers and educators in schools; employment of mother-tongue communicators; strengthening of parenting skills of people from the MRC background; breaking down prejudices; as well as acceptance of the idea of the need for a stimulating environment for the development of pre-school children. See more on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/np-prim-ii-projekt-inkluzie-v-materskych-skolach/>

In 2022 and 2023, **OGPRC staff and members of local civil order services were trained by experts on the topic of THB, with an emphasis on identifying potential victims, focusing on particularly vulnerable victims (children)**, as well as practical advice on what to do in cases of suspected THB offences, who to contact, and what preventive activities to implement in their neighbourhoods. During the trainings, the topics of forced marriages, forced begging, sexual exploitation, whose victims (potential or actual) are often adolescents and children from marginalised backgrounds, were discussed.

The staff of the OGPRC participated in a targeted training on communication sensitive to children as victims of THB, as well as THB issues organised by the Academy of Education, the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Presidium of the Police Force (hereinafter referred to as the “BBFP P PF”) and UNICEF on 7 and 8 April 2022. The training under the guidance of foreign lecturers was held in the context of the situation in Ukraine and focused on the practical aspect of identifying potential victims and various aspects of communication with a child - a potential or actual victim of THB. The outputs were communicated to other OGPRC staff.

On 7 April 2021, the Government of the SR approved the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 by Resolution No. 181/2021. This framework strategic document is a commitment of the Government of the SR, which defines the direction of public policies at the level of priorities in order to achieve a visible change in the area of equality and inclusion of Roma. The strategy focuses on 5 priority areas - employment, education, health, housing with special emphasis on non-discrimination and intensifying interventions in the fight against anti-Roma racism. On April 6, 2022, Government Resolution of the SR No. 256/2022 adopted **Action Plans for the years 2022-2024**. The strategy, together with the Action Plans for the said strategy, represents a strategic framework with specific measures aimed at improving the living conditions of Roma men and women, their socio-economic inclusion and reducing their vulnerability and exclusion. The creation of a protective environment for children through a change in attitudes, protection against certain habits or behaviour is related, among others, to measures in the field of combating anti-Roma racism and education. The global goal of the Action Plan **to combat anti-Roma racism and promote participation** by 2030 is to eliminate anti-Roma racism, promote anti-discrimination and participation, and increase the protection of the most vulnerable groups and individuals. In the priority **area of education**, the global goal by 2030 is to ensure equal access of Roma men and women to quality education in the main educational stream from birth to joining the labour market, with an emphasis on the application of desegregation and inclusive measures in the educational process at all levels of education. Sub-objective 4 is aimed at systematically preventing, mitigating and eliminating manifestations of segregation in the educational process at all levels of the educational system, defined measures and activities aimed at eliminating segregated education, which supports negative attitudes towards children and youth from marginalised environments, and thus contributes to discriminatory dealing with them. One of the expected consequences of the given measures and activities is the

creation of better conditions for inclusive education, and thus also for mitigating prejudices and attitudes towards children and youth from MRC. The Strategy is published on the website of the OGPRC in the Slovak language: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/strategia_2030.pdf and in the English language:

https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1526/strategy_of_equality_inclusion_and_participation_of_roma_until_2030.pdf. The Action Plans are published on the website of the OGPRC in the Slovak language: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategia-pre-rovnost-inkluziu-a-participaciu-romov-do-roku-2030/>;

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556 and in the English language:

<https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategy-of-equality-inclusion-and-participation-of-roma-until-2030/>;

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1526/action_plans_2022_2024_of_the_strategy_of_equality_inclusion_and_participation_of_roma_until_2030-1.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556

- b. developing children's life skills (including media literacy and online safety skills), knowledge and participation;

Ministry of Interior

In the evaluated period, the IC MI SR continued to increase awareness of the issue of THB and the possibilities of assistance. Individual lectures focused on identifying potential risks, especially in relation to travelling abroad for work or temporary jobs. As part of the lectures, a number of promotional materials containing information on assistance options and preventive advice were distributed. On the basis of the cooperation of the IC MI SR with the CLSAF within the framework of the National Project of Support for the Protection of Children from Violence, exhibitions and educational lectures were held for pupils of primary schools (hereinafter referred to as "PSs") and students of secondary schools (hereinafter referred to as "SSs"), connected with an exhibition of pictures under the title "*Do you know what your child is doing now?*". A nationwide billboard campaign entitled "*Don't close your eyes to it!*" was also implemented, which was aimed at raising awareness of the existence of the National Helpline for THB victims 0800 800 818. The task of the free national helpline is to provide professional advice and information in the field of THB. The National Helpline for THB victims 0800 800 818 is also advertised at all lectures and the telephone number is visibly displayed on all promotional materials. As part of the media circuit, a summary of information was provided for the media from all over Slovakia, and a short video with information on how not to become a victim of THB was provided via social networks. The Ministry of Interior also provides up-to-date and verified information on potential risks and prevention options for THB through the official website of the Ministry of Interior, thus contributing to the dissemination of information through this medium as well. Also in 2022, the IC MI SR implemented a nationwide educational activity in cooperation with the CLSAF and the Presidium of the Police Force for children from CCFs, within the entire territory of the Slovak Republic. On the basis of demand, the IC MI SR continues to provide interviews in the media and the Facebook page is being filled, which is dedicated to the issue of THB and serves as one of the tools of communication with the public (<https://www.facebook.com/obchodovaniesludmi/>).

Members of the communication and prevention departments of the regional headquarters of the Police Force and the internal departments of the district headquarters of the Police Force implemented preventive activities focused on the issue of THB. The aim of the preventive activities is to prevent THB - related crime, to provide young people with information on how to look for a job abroad, to highlight the risks of working abroad, the risks of travelling and staying abroad, as well as the

possibilities of assistance abroad. The mentioned activities (lectures, discussions) were organised mainly for students of SSs and pupils of higher grades of PSs, but also for crisis centres and CCFs. As part of media coverage of the given issue, they also published posts on the Facebook social network and provided content for other media.

The employees of NUFIM BBFP P PF carried out educational activities, among others, also at schools (SSs and universities), with the aim of providing a basic minimum on the issue of THB, usable in practice for the target group, networking with relevant police units and possibilities of assistance for victims of THB.

The Crime Prevention Department of the Office of the Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “CPD OMI SR”), also through Information Offices, implements educational preventive activities for at-risk population groups (especially youth, seniors, Ukrainian expats) with a focus on various topics in the area of crime prevention. In the period from 2018 to 30 June 2023, a total of 1,843 educational preventive activities were carried out for 51,468 youth participants. Attention was paid to the topics “Prevention of THB” (338 educational preventive activities for 10,339 children); Media literacy - hoaxes, misinformation and fake news (66 educational preventive activities for 1,732 children); Bullying and cyberbullying (732 educational preventive activities for 16,270 children); Hate speech (323 educational preventive activities for 10,474 children) and “Internet safety of children and young people” (384 educational preventive activities for 12,653 children).

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

Within the scope of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, preventive, educational and training activities aimed at developing children’s life skills (including media literacy and online safety skills) are organised mainly for children who are placed in CCFs. Each CCF has a prepared plan for the prevention of socio-pathological phenomena, which includes awareness-raising and educational activities aimed at, inter alia, acquisition of skills in eliminating risks and pitfalls in the field of THB. The aforementioned activities are regularly organised and implemented by the professional and educational team of CCF in cooperation with experts, institutions, and non-governmental organisations that deal with the aforementioned issue. Since the groups most at risk of THB include minors who found themselves in the territory of the Slovak Republic unaccompanied by a parent, or of another legal guardian (unaccompanied minors, hereinafter referred to as “UMs”), these preventive activities are particularly accentuated in the CCF Medzilaborce, whose employees ensure specific approaches to the identification and prevention of THB risk for UMs, which are implemented not only within the framework of case conferences with the participation of an interpreter, or a cultural mediator in a language that the UM understands. Among the activities focused on media literacy and skills in the field of online safety, we include, for example: cooperation with the civil association Náruč - Help for children in crisis and with the civil association IPčko in the areas of cyberbullying, grooming and other pitfalls of the online space. CCFs used the manual entitled Cybergrooming and sexual abuse of adolescents in the online space - Manual for teaching and professional staff to prepare and implement preventive activities focusing on safety in the online space for children in CCFs as part of professional and educational activities.

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport has prepared a new curriculum for primary schools, after completing which the pupils should be able to:

- responsibly and safely use digital technologies and media for education, communication and perceive their contribution to innovation, be aware of the opportunities and risks they represent,
- cooperate with other people, be in solidarity and prefer consensual solutions in conflict situations,

- use critical thinking based on knowledge and ethical values,
- act based on knowledge of social and legal norms, human rights, tolerance of diversity and in accordance with the democratic culture of society.

OGPRC:

In the period 1/2017 and 10/2023, the OGPRC implemented the project **Support for pre-primary education of children from MRC II (PRIM II)**. Information from the OGPRC on the project is provided in the answer to question 2(a).

The outputs from the PRIM II project were communicated to the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, which followed them up in the project **Support of Helping Professions (POP 3)**. In the POP 3 project, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport left the outputs of good practice acquired throughout the duration of the PRIM II National Project, namely the preservation of the proven position of parental assistants in localities where at least 30% of children in kindergartens are from Roma communities (this it also includes the application of temporary compensatory measures - primary employment of Roma men and women from specific locations); special educators also continue in the POP 3 project; experience and recommendations from the NP PRIM II, including the verified stimulation program, continue to be used in the implementation of the POP 3 project. See more about the national project on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

<https://www.minedu.sk/zverejnili-sme-vyzvu-na-zapojenie-sa-do-narodneho-projektu-podpora-pomahajucich-profesii-3/>

On 17 July 2023, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport announced a “**Grant scheme to support the provision of early care and early intervention to children aged 0-6**”, especially from the MRC environment and generational poverty, based on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic, Component 6 : Availability, development and quality of inclusive education at all levels.

The main goal of this Grant Scheme is to support early care services and activities in MRC in an environment of multi-generational poverty and the involvement of early care assistants. The emphasis of the call is aimed at involving people directly from the communities, who know the language and local conditions, whose task is to work with families, help develop children’s cognitive and motor skills, prepare them to enter formal pre-primary education and raise awareness about the importance of early care among children’s parents. The primary target groups of the Grant Scheme are the parents and the child’s family, and the implementation of the activities itself should take place in the natural environment of the family - in the home environment in the presence of parents, in community centres and social housing facilities. The Grant Scheme does not interfere with the activities of KGs. EUR 6,263,520 is allocated to the Grant Scheme for the years 2023-2026.

As part of the Grant Scheme, a call for non-governmental organisations is also announced with the title “Support for the provision of early care and early intervention to children aged 0 to 6 from the MRC environment and from the environment of generational poverty”. Through this call, non-governmental organisations working in the field of support of early care and early intervention in MRC and multigenerational poverty can apply for financial assistance. See more on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport in the Slovak language: <https://www.minedu.sk/grantova-schema-na-podporu-ranej-starostlivosti-a-intervencie/>

Since 24 February 2023, the OGPRC (**technical assistance of the Recovery and Resilience Plan**) has been cooperating with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (the implementing entity of calls) as an intermediary.

Within Component 7: Education for the 21st century, Investments 2: Project number 19 Completion of school infrastructure, the aim is to expand the capacities of PSs in districts that do not have optimal access to education (double-shift operation of schools) and at the same time Project number 21, for

areas with a high number of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, school libraries will be completed to support the development of reading literacy (learning centres).

The OGPRC cooperates on 3 open calls - a call to eliminate the two-shift operation of PSs (see more on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport: <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-odstranenie-dvojzmennej-prevadzky-zakladnych-skol/>); a call to increase the capacities of PSs (see more on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport: <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-zvysenie-kapacit-zakladnych-skol/>) and a call to increase the capacities of KGs (see more on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport: <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-zvysenie-kapacit-materskych-skol/>). It also cooperated on the call for project support for the elimination of double-shift operations of PSs (see more on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport: <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-projektovu-podporu-na-odstranenie-dvojzmennej-prevadzky-zakladnych-skol/>), which is linked to the call for the elimination of double-shift operations of PSs and was closed on 31 July 2023, while 18 applicants out of 46 eligible applicants participated in it.

See more about the Recovery and Resilience Plan Technical Assistance Department, OGPRC on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/urad/skarp/odbor-technickej-asistencie-planu-obnovy-a-odolnosti/>

In the Action Plans for the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for the years 2022-2024 - in the priority area - Fight against Anti-Roma Racism and the Promotion of Participation, within sub-objective 2 “Reduce prejudices and stereotypes about Roma men and women, strengthen human rights education and tolerance education”, there is a measure defined: 2.3 “Work with innovative methods and strategies in the field of learning critical thinking and media literacy” with the activity imposed: 2.3.1 “Implement an educational programme aimed at human rights education and leading to critical thinking, with the aim of sensitising polarising topics in society and increasing the level of tolerance for male and female students aged 13-17”. The activity is planned for 2023 and 2024 under the management of the OGPRC in cooperation with the non-profit sector, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and the regions. Another planned activity is activity 2.4.1 “Support of preventive activities and programmes for pupils, students, teaching and professional staff, residents of MRC aimed at breaking down prejudices and stereotypes associated with the perception of minorities in Slovakia, with the aim of strengthening critical thinking and the ability to distinguish misinformation , thereby preventing the polarisation of society through targeted calls (the calls will be targeted for non-profit and non-governmental organisations and registered churches and religious societies)”. The measure will be implemented through a demand-oriented call aimed at non-profit and non-governmental organisations and registered churches and religious societies. In addition to the given activity, the measures and activities defined in the priority area of Education directly lead to or are supporting measures for the development of skills and knowledge. The Action Plans are published on the website of the OGPRC in the Slovak language: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategia-pre-rovnost-inkluziu-a-participaciu-romov-doroku-2030/>;

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556 and in the English language: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategy-of-equality-inclusion-and-participation-of-roma-until-2030/>;

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1526/action_plans_2022_2024_of_the_strategy_of_equality_inclusion_and_participation_of_roma_until_2030-1.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556

- c. putting in place a system for monitoring and reporting cases of abuse;

Ministry of Interior:

In 2020, the IC MI SR amended and made publicly available the “National Referral Mechanism” material. The aforementioned national reference framework represents a structure of cooperating entities through which state authorities fulfil their obligations in connection with the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons who have become victims of THB, while coordinating their efforts within the framework of a strategic partnership with civil society. Victim of THB means any natural person who has been or is supposed to have been physically harmed, caused property damage, moral or other damage as a result of the crime of THB, or whose rights or freedoms protected by law have been violated or threatened. The goal of the national reference framework is transparency in the area of competences and responsibilities of individual entities, as well as a flexible response to changing conditions. The document is based on international and European legal standards in the field of combating THB, to which the Slovak Republic has committed itself, primarily on the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Additional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, i.e. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, or 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.

The national reference framework creates space for cooperation between governmental and non-governmental entities. Its structure consists at the highest level of the National Coordinator for combating THB, representatives of central government bodies, representatives of the local government and non-governmental/international organisations in the Expert Group and, last but not least, ad hoc working groups dealing with specific problems related to victims of THB. In a broader context, however, the National Referral Mechanism includes anyone who identifies a victim of THB, including the victims themselves or their family members, and refers the victim to existing structures and institutions in order to ensure help and support for the victim.

On the basis of the service provision contract concluded between the Ministry of Interior and the SCC, the SCC operates the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818. The main task of the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818 is to provide help and information in the first contact with persons who have found themselves or could find themselves in such a risky situation. When identifying and assisting in such cases, the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818 provides contact to organisations providing professional assistance to victims of THB. Helpline services are further aimed at prevention and elimination of risks associated with work abroad, operators warn the callers of the danger of THB. The helpline also serves as a tool to prevent risks associated with labour migration and unprotected work of vulnerable population groups.

The NUFIM BBFP P PF, as a specialised department of the police for the investigation of the crime of THB within the system of monitoring and reporting THB cases, actively cooperates with the CLSAF, which monitors children in families, and in case of gaining knowledge or suspicion of possible child trafficking, the information is immediately sent to the NUFIM BBFP P PF. The latter will then check all the facts and, if they are confirmed, will take immediate actions aimed at helping the child, isolating him from the criminal environment and initiating criminal prosecution. An important tool for monitoring and the possibility of even anonymous reporting of suspected THB is the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818, through which information and help can be obtained in the case of suspected THB. Relevant information obtained through the National Helpline is further forwarded to the NUFIM BBFP P PF for further action. In the same way, the NUFIM BBFP P PF actively cooperates with Information Offices, which, upon obtaining knowledge of suspected THB, immediately refer the given information to the NUFIM BBFP P PF for further action.

Within the Ministry of Interior, in connection with the identification of potential victims of THB, training is carried out for members of the Police Force on existing tools and on the identification and reporting of THB suspicions.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

Healthcare providers, health insurance companies, courts, institutions of the prison and judicial guard corps, Social Insurance Agency, law enforcement authorities, schools, school facilities, district offices, other government bodies, municipalities and higher territorial units are obliged to cooperate with the SLPCSG authorities and facilities established for the execution of a court decision for the purpose of implementing SLPCSG measures. SLPCSG authorities, healthcare providers, health insurance companies, courts, institutions of the prison and judicial guard corps, Social Insurance Agency, law enforcement authorities, schools, school facilities, district offices and other government bodies have the same obligation to municipalities and higher territorial units, to the extent necessary for the exercise of their self-governing powers. Cooperation is regulated in relation to the implementation of any SLPCSG measures towards SLPCSG authorities and SLPCSG facilities, i.e. in the scope of the entire spectrum of measures implemented by the SLPCSG authority. At the request of the SLPCSG, the obligation of all legal and natural persons (school, school facility, healthcare provider, etc.) to provide free of charge the information necessary for the purpose of verifying the level of care of parents or persons who personally care for the child is regulated. The obligation to provide information does not exempt any legal or natural person from the obligation to notify any case of, inter alia, only suspicions of child ill-treatment, abuse or neglect to law enforcement authorities. Even if one of the entities reports such a fact to the SLPCSG authority, they are obliged to report it to the law enforcement authorities at the same time and to not expect the SLPCSG authority to fulfil this obligation for them.

The authority of SLPCSG assesses the situation of each child and their family and **determines the level of risk of the child**. The SLPCSG authority is obliged to receive and evaluate every complaint regarding the violation of the child's rights, while the initiative for evaluating the child's situation is not only a notification about a threat to the life, health or favourable development of the child, or about the use of rude or humiliating forms of treatment of the child and forms of punishment of the child, but any information, submission, request, notice from various sources including the appointment of the CLSAF as legal guardian in court proceedings, or request of law enforcement authorities for cooperation if the child is suspected of committing a crime and others. After receiving the complaint, an employee of the SLPCSG department will check and evaluate the child's situation. If the employee of the SLPCSG authority is not allowed to verify the child's condition and has information indicating that the child is at risk to life and health, he or she may petition the court for permission to enter the dwelling. In carrying out the measures, the SLPCSG authority cooperates with stakeholders such as a doctor, school, police, municipality, etc. If necessary, it will propose the implementation or ensure the implementation of a professional method - evaluation of the situation of the child and the family, assessment of the possibilities of the parents, other relatives and other close persons of the child to solve the situation of the child and the family for the purpose of determining the degree of endangerment of the child (Article 11(3)(b) point 5 of Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on the SLPCSG and on the amendment to certain acts - SLPCSG authority).

The SLPCSG authority can ensure the implementation of measures to evaluate the situation of the child and the family, assessment of the possibilities of the parents, other relatives and other close persons of the child to solve the situation of the child and the family for the purpose of determining the degree of endangerment of the child, in an outpatient form or in the field form in the centre, if the measures carried out in its own competence could not clearly determine the degree of endangerment of the child (Article 73 (6a) of Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on the SLPCSG and on the amendment to certain acts).

If the complaint is information about a threat to the life, health or favourable development of a child or information about the use of rude or humiliating forms of treatment of a child and forms of punishment of a child, it is necessary to immediately carry out the so-called preliminary evaluation, if the current situation of the child allows it, no later than 5 days from the date of receipt of the complaint.

A comprehensive assessment of the situation of the child and his/her family, even in situations where any information, request or notification is received by the SLPCSG authority, can contribute to the early identification of victims of violence, even in cases where the content of the complaint does not directly imply such suspicion. Such legal procedures ensure the early identification of child victims of violence and sexual abuse.

With effect from 1 January 2019, among other things, the legal conditions for providing professional assistance to a child who is a victim of a crime of THB, a child ill-treated or sexually abused, and the conditions for implementing measures to verify the level of danger to a child from ill-treatment, sexual abuse or other acts threatening its life, health, favourable psychological, physical or social development (e.g. Article 46, Article 46, etc.) were put more precisely and specified. The new assistance conditions are a part of more broadly conceived fundamental changes in the conditions of assistance to children and families in the Slovak Republic. CCFs were created from various types of facilities, in which the conditions of performance were newly adjusted according to the purpose of assistance they specialise in and the forms of assistance⁴ they provide (residential, outpatient, field), including the refinement of professional, personnel, spatial standards and changes to the financing system.

In view of the fact that professional help in crisis situations of a child who is a victim of THB crime, a child who has been ill-treated or sexually abused (or verification of the degree of endangerment of a child by ill-treatment, sexual abuse or other actions threatening its life, health, favourable psychological, physical or social development) has its own specifics - the performance of assistance is regulated separately in the form of a specialised programme.

Since the essence of such specialisation is to provide professional assistance to a child in a crisis situation (criminal act) or to verify whether the child is at risk, e.g. ill-treatment, sexual abuse (diagnosis is essential, in addition to focusing on professional help in existing situations, it is also important to confirm or refute the assumption, whether or not the child is at risk of e.g. sexual abuse), the emphasis is placed on the timeliness of such measures. In addition to the possibility of placing the child in the centre based on an agreement with the parent/person who personally cares for the child (on the recommendation of the SLPCSG authority) and at the request of the child (Article 46(2)), the child can also be accepted on the basis of a court decision on ordering an urgent measure or about the imposition of an educational measure. The centre whose purpose is a specialised programme is obliged to carry out measures according to the elaborated specialised programme of the centre, but it is not obliged (unlike the programmes of other centres) to publish the programme on its website.

The entire SLPCSG system is designed in such a way that, in cooperation with other responsible entities, it is possible to provide children, including children who report cases of abuse in their family (regardless of whether the primary victim is a child or who is a possible perpetrator), in a timely manner

⁴The purpose of the centres

- a) measures temporarily replacing the child's natural family or surrogate family environment on the basis of a court decision to order institutional care, to order an urgent measure or to impose an educational measure - **residence measure of the court**
- b) **outpatient educational measure** decided by a court or a SLPCSG authority in administrative proceedings
- c) **measures to prevent occurrence, deepening and repetition**
 - of crisis situations of a child in a natural family or surrogate family environment,
 - disorders of the child's psychological, physical or social development due to problems in different environments (family, surrogate family, wider social environment)
- d) a **specialised programme** for the prevention of the emergence, deepening and repetition of crisis situations of a child *who is a victim of a criminal offence of human trafficking, a child ill-treated or sexually abused*, or for implementing measures to *verify the degree of danger to a child from ill-treatment, sexual abuse or other acts threatening its life, health, favourable psychological, physical or social development*,
- e) **resocialisation programme** to support the social inclusion of a child or an adult physical person addicted to alcohol, drugs or pathological gambling.

the help they need. The legal conditions allow for different intensity and form of assistance to the child (depending on the degree of threat, taking into account the circumstances in the family and the family's possibilities) - from outpatient assistance, through residence forms of assistance based on an agreement with the parents, to court intervention in the form of urgent measures and residence assistance based on a court decision.

With effect from 1 January 2019, the CLSAF methodically guides all CCFs that implement measures. All regulations, methodological guidelines or internal standards issued by the CLSAF are binding for entities that carry out measures of the SLPCSG on the basis of the granted accreditation (non-state entities), which also standardises procedures and processes in the accredited entities.

Within the scope of the determined competence of the employees of the SLPCSG departments, who carry out their activities at all 46 offices of labour, social affairs and family and at the separate department of the CLSAF, which coordinates the activities of the offices of labour, social affairs and family and CCFs, which are within the founding competence of the CLSAF, in the field of fulfilling the tasks of national plans of programmes in the field of social prevention, the CLSAF presents selected data. Designated employees of the SLPCSG departments of the offices of labour, social affairs and family closely cooperate with the operational and investigation departments of the NUFIM BBFP P PF - they are the contact persons who, among other things, provide assistance and protection through their physical presence to the UM who found himself/herself on the territory of the SR unaccompanied, ensure immediate actions in the interest of the child and participate in the solution in cooperation with the investigators until a guardian is appointed for the UM according to a special regulation or until the appointed guardian assumes his/her function, or until the moment of the decision to place the child in a facility.

Ministry of Health:

Measures taken on the subject at the Ministry of Health are included in the materials: Annex No. 2 - National register of persons suspected of neglect, ill-treatment, abuse and persons who have been subjected to violence, based on Act No. 153/2013 Coll. on the national health information system and on the amendment to certain acts, as amended, the Professional Guidelines of the Ministry of Health on the symptoms and diagnosis of neglect, ill-treatment or abuse of a minor and on the procedure of healthcare providers when reporting suspected neglect, ill-treatment or abuse of a minor.

- d. providing training to child care professionals, legal guardians, education professionals;

Ministry of Interior:

Since 2019, the IC MI SR has been cooperating with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the implementation of cyclical educational activities for employees of the SLPCSG authority and professional employees of CCFs in the issue of THB. In order to raise awareness of the issue of THB and at the same time to expand the spectrum of entities that will be able to identify a potential victim of THB, the IC MI SR conducted training activities for the staff of the Pedagogical-Psychological Counselling and Prevention Centres and other professional groups during the assessment period. Regular training sessions were also held for commissioned members of the Police Force and investigators of the Police Force on the identification of THB within the framework of the project "*Special interrogation rooms for child victims and other particularly vulnerable victims of crime*".

The NUFIM BBFP P PF, as an executive unit that primarily carries out activities related to the detection, documentation and investigation of the criminal activity of THB, also conducts lecture and training activities for members of the Police Force, as well as various professional groups working with children, such as CCFs staff carrying out SLPCSG measures, offices of labour, social affairs and

family, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, the OGPRC on the issue of THB and the identification of victims of this criminal activity.

The Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “MO MI SR”) stated that, in terms of identification and assistance to child victims of THB, only children within the framework of their families are placed in the facilities of the MO MI SR. UMs are placed in the facilities of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. As part of the asylum procedure, these persons are met by the decision-makers conducting the asylum procedure. All decision-makers completed the training course of the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA) on the module “Conducting interviews with children” in October-November 2022. It is an educational course that includes both theoretical and practical training related to conducting interviews with children, while it was also aimed at identifying various problems that can arise from working with children, including the potential threat of this group from the point of view of THB. In the context of other trainings that decision-makers have received, they are thus sufficiently prepared to detect THB involving children. Moreover, in the framework of the asylum procedure for minors the decision-makers of the MO MI SR closely cooperate with the specialised staff of the office of labour, social affairs and family, who act as guardians for unaccompanied minors.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

In cooperation with the IC MI SR, cyclical educational activities are carried out for employees of the SLPCSG authority and professional employees of CCFs in the field of THB. (content: legislative framework of the crime of THB, possibilities to help victims, procedure for suspicion of THB).

A total of **2773** professional employees from all CCFs in Slovakia completed the training. In **2022**, the cooperation continued in the form of prevention and education sessions for children aged 16 and over and young adults in the CCFs. The aim of these activities was to support children and young adults so that they have the most relevant information when they leave the CCF. Workers in direct contact with children, or natural persons of full age were also informed about the current measures within the framework of internal educational or training activities and methodological guidelines.

Especially following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, a methodological guideline focused on **“Measures for the elimination of THB risk, especially in relation to UMs”** was developed, which was (together with identification questions aimed at assessing the indicators of possible THB who found themselves in our territory as a result of the war conflict), subsequently distributed to all offices of labour, social affairs and family, as well as CCFs.

The Coordination and Methodological Centre for Gender-Based and Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to as the “CMC”) established within the Institute for Labour and Family Research has prepared **free online education on sexual violence against children for professional staff** (lecturer doc. ThDr. Mgr. Slávka Karkošková, PhD.) The education was mandatory for psychologists, social workers, special pedagogues, educators, assistant educators, professional surrogate parents and other workers who work in direct contact with the child from all CCFs. In the period from September 2022 to November 2022, 3,381 CCF employees participated in the education in 6 modules. In cooperation with the Slovak Institute for Psychotraumatology and EMDR, with lecturer Mgr. Jana Ashford, ALMA Centre for Healthy Development, in the second half of 2022, there was online training of pedagogical staff and professional staff of CCFs on the issue of working with a traumatised child. The aim of this activity was to draw the attention of employees who work with children in CCFs to the causes of trauma and subsequent manifestations in the behaviour of a traumatised child with the aim of identification and subsequent help. In addition to professional information, the participants also received a stack of practical activities that they can use in their work. A total of 675 professional employees and pedagogical employees from all CCFs in Slovakia completed the training.

Training was also carried out for 15 direct contact employees in the CCF Medzilaborce on the topic: Identification of victims of THB and other forms of violence perpetrated on UMs. The guarantor of education was the International Organisation for Migration (hereinafter referred to as the “IOM”).

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

In relation to the provision of professional training to experts in the field of child care, legal guardians, experts in the field of education, the following materials were prepared:

1. Starting points for the preparation of a school preventive strategy - prevention of risky behaviour of children and pupils (framework, topics for schools and school facilities for the preparation of a school preventive strategy), which are available at ([Microsoft Word - V\375chodisk\341 k strat\351gii\232koly v prevencii rizikov\351ho spr\341vania \4\](#)) ([statpedu.sk](#)).
- 2 Everyone does it! – the background documents for prevention in the school environment (a methodology aimed at prevention and promoting the use of activating methods, group work, discussion and cooperative problem-solving when working with pupils; prevention of smoking and alcoholism), which are available at [Všetci to robia!, k prevencii v škole - ŠPÚ \(statpedu.sk\)](#).
3. Challenges in the prevention of unwanted, risky behaviour among pupils, and at the same time framework methodological recommendations on how to respond to them [skolska-socializacia-nove-vyzvy-prevencii.pdf \(statpedu.sk\)](#).
4. Recommendations and tools for monitoring problematic situations in the classroom and school - Living with controversial issues - teaching controversial topics through education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE) - an educational package for teachers, available at [https://www.komposyt.sk/pre-odbornikov/psychologiccka-cinnost/prevencia11678.pdf\(minedu.sk\)](https://www.komposyt.sk/pre-odbornikov/psychologiccka-cinnost/prevencia11678.pdf(minedu.sk)).

OGPRC:

In the years 2019-2023, the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology implemented the **National Project “Standardisation of the counselling and prevention system for inclusion and success on the labour market”**. The vision of the project was to prepare a system that, in the field of counselling, prevention and diagnostics, will bring closer the state in which children and their families with diverse needs will receive high-quality care throughout Slovakia, anchored in a multidisciplinary approach.

The national project in question brought procedural standards in the system of educational counselling and prevention (which are followed by content, performance and material-technical standards); verified multidisciplinary cooperation in practice to solve problematic situations in children’s lives; trained 1718 pedagogical and professional employees in the topics of social-psychological training, therapeutic methods, supervision in counselling activities, career education and career counselling; supported the strategic development of educational counselling and prevention school facilities and special educational facilities; as well as provided support in the implementation of standards in practice. The outputs of the project were adopted by the National Council of the SR in 2023 and are valid from 1 September 2023. More information about the mentioned national project can be found on the website of the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology in the Slovak language: <https://vudpap.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Projektovy-letak-v1.01.pdf>

- e. access to education and health care for vulnerable children, including from minority groups, unaccompanied migrant children, and children of migrant workers;

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

The SR, through the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, within the Grant Scheme for the Support of Early Care and Early Intervention announced under the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR, has published a call entitled “Support for the provision of early care and early intervention to children aged 0 to 6 from the MRC environment and from the environment of generational poverty”. Barriers existing in MRC and generational poverty environments, including lower awareness of the benefits of pre-primary education, as well as poorer educational readiness of children growing up in generational poverty environments, are among the key factors influencing pupils’ later educational outcomes. Projects focusing on children’s healthy cognitive, social and psychomotor development and the development of parenting skills and competences will be supported, with the aim of improving the chances of children from these backgrounds to be included in mainstream education. Emphasis will be placed on the creation of early care assistant positions through the involvement of persons directly from the community who are proficient in the language and local conditions and who receive quality training and mentoring. Supporting early care services will also strengthen gender equality in these communities. The call forms an important element in ensuring the conditions for creating an inclusive school environment and for increasing the chances for the social inclusion of Roma men and women. The call is also in line with the goals of the Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation until 2030, the Strategy for an Inclusive Approach in Education until 2030, and the National Strategy for the Development of Coordinated Early Intervention and Early Care Services for 2022-2030.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport has published information on the website regarding the situation in Ukraine both for regional education, as well as for universities (hereinafter referred to as “universities”) and sports, as well as information on supporting materials and activities. Offers are also published there not only for individual school finding for students, but also information and advisory materials for parents, or for job offers in schools, even in the Ukrainian language: <https://ukrajina.minedu.sk/>.

Professional procedures were created, which are also devoted to the following area: A child with a different mother tongue in the counselling and education process - a child with a Roma mother tongue, A child with a different mother tongue in the counselling and education process - a child of foreigners, available at <https://vudpap.sk/hlavne-cinnosti/odborne-materialy/odborne-postupy-a-skusenosti/odborne-postupy/>. Much attention is paid to career counselling in schools and educational institutions, creation of manuals for civic associations: Guide for a career counsellor at the Centre for Pedagogical-Psychological Counselling and Prevention, Practical manual for supporting elementary school pupils with special educational needs when transitioning to secondary schools (hereinafter referred to as “SSs”) of a regular type, Support for children with special educational needs during the transition to a regular type of secondary school, Manual for the parent), The role of the social pedagogue in the application of desegregation in the context of an inclusive approach at school.

Ministry of Health:

Pursuant to Article 11 (2) of Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on healthcare, services related to healthcare provision and on the amendment to certain acts as amended: The right to the provision of healthcare and services related to the provision of healthcare, including cross-border healthcare, shall be guaranteed equally to everyone, in accordance with the principle of equal treatment in healthcare and in the provision of goods and services laid down in a special regulation. In accordance with the principle of equal treatment, discrimination on grounds of sex, religion or belief, race, nationality, membership of a national or ethnic group, sexual orientation, marital or family status, colour, language, political or other opinion, trade union activity, national or social origin, disability, age, property, gender or other status is also prohibited.

OGPRC:

On the topic in question, the OGPRC provided information on the **Grant Call - Early Care**, which is described in more detail in the answer to question 2 b).

Zdravé regióny (Healthy Regions) is a state contributory organisation of the Ministry of Health, whose mission is the implementation and development of temporary balancing measures in the field of health, especially in the environment of marginalised and segregated communities in Slovakia.

The goal of the organisation is to reduce barriers in the access to healthcare (including increasing its availability, awareness of the residents of MRC about healthcare and prevention), increasing health literacy and improving health-related behaviour. In the area of care for vulnerable children, the work of Zdravé regióny is divided into two important streams: care for children and families in the environment of the communities themselves and care for children and families in the hospital environment. Zdravé regióny systematically works to increase participation in preventive examinations and mandatory vaccinations, ensure early identification of the occurrence of infectious diseases, increase the level of awareness of healthcare, improve the level of personal and communal hygiene, provide education on the prevention of the use of addictive substances and improve the care of mothers with children (postpartum care, breastfeeding support). More about the work of the Zdravé regióny organisation can be found on their website in the Slovak language: <https://www.zdraveregiony.eu/>

On the subject, the OGPRC provided information on the **Action Plans for the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for the years 2022-2024**, which are described in more detail in the answer to question 2 b).

In 2023, the **Monitoring Report for 2022** was published **together with an appendix**, further information is provided in the answer to question 2 e).

Together with the Action Plans, the **Methodological Document for the calculation of indicator values** was also approved, which is a manual for calculating the value of indicators of global objectives and sub-objectives of the priority areas of the Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation until 2030, presented in a uniform structure. The Methodological Document is published on the website of the OGPRC in the Slovak language: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/05_priloha-ap_metodicky-dokument-k-indikatorom_final.pdf

As part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (Component 6 Reform 1), Slovakia is committed to making pre-primary education available to all children in Slovakia. The given commitment is linked to the amendment of Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on upbringing and education (School Act) and on the amendment to certain acts, which introduced compulsory pre-primary education for children aged 5 and over. By 2026, the right to get a place in KG for children aged 3 and over should be valid. Since 24 February 2023, the OGPRC (**technical assistance of the Recovery and Resilience Plan**) has been cooperating with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (the implementing entity of calls) as an intermediary within Component 6 Reform 1 and Component 7 Investment 2 of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. The basic prerequisite for increasing the enrolment of children in pre-primary education is sufficient capacity (i.e. children will not be denied the opportunity to attend kindergarten due to lack of space). Within Component 7: Education for the 21st century, Investments 2: Project number 19 Completion of school infrastructure, the aim is to expand the capacities of PSs in districts that do not have optimal access to education (double-shift operation of schools) and at the same time Project number 21, for areas with a high number of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, school libraries will be completed to support the development of reading literacy (learning centres) (hereinafter referred to as “Investment K7 I2”). The OGPRC cooperates on 3 open calls - a call to eliminate the two-shift operation of PSs (see more on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport: <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-odstranenie-dvojzmennej-prevadzky-zakladnych-skol/>); a call to increase the capacities of PSs (see more on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

[kapacit-zakladnych-skol/](#)) and a call to increase the capacities of KGs (see more on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport: <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-zvysenie-kapacit-materskych-skol/>). It also cooperated on the call for project support for the elimination of double-shift operations of PSs (see more on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport: <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-projektovu-podporu-na-odstranenie-dvojzmennej-prevadzky-zakladnych-skol/>).

In the period 10/2020 – 03/2022, the Government Office of the Slovak Republic, OGPRC, as a beneficiary, implemented the **national project “Support of activities aimed at solving adverse situations related to the disease COVID-19 in municipalities with the presence of MRC”**. The project was financed from the European Structural and Investment Funds within the Operational Programme Human Resources, Priority Axis 5 Integration of MRC. 210 municipalities were involved in the national project, which were covered by 208 workers. The main goal of the project was to improve access to healthcare and public health, including preventive healthcare and health education in connection with the disease COVID-19, monitoring the state of risk, the possibility of infection and the development of the disease COVID-19 directly in the affected MRC, to act in a targeted way in social intervention to the residents and members of the MRC in the affected areas, also with material, food, hygiene, technical and communication support in the event of an imminent or declared state of emergency declared due to the occurrence of the disease COVID-19. Last but not least, the goal of the project was to eliminate the threat of the occurrence of the disease COVID-19 or other pandemic diseases in the locality to which the project activities are directed and to prepare the residents of MRC for possible further waves of the spread of the disease COVID-19 or other types of epidemics in the future. See more about the national project on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/covid-mrk/>

- f. birth registration for all children born in the country.

Ministry of Interior:

In accordance with Article 13 of Act of the National Council of the SR No. 154/1994 Coll. on register offices, as amended, the birth of a live child and the birth of a dead child are reported for registration in the birth book. The registration of a child born at an institutional healthcare provider in the birth book is made on the basis of data provided by the National Health Information Centre through the information system. In other cases, entry in the birth book is made on the basis of the notification obligation of one of the parents. The person who is subject to the notification obligation is obliged to make the notification no later than three working days from the date of birth. The mother can fulfil the notification obligation even after this period, as soon as she is able to make the notification. In the case of the birth of a child outside a healthcare facility, the notifier is obliged to personally notify the birth of the child. When announcing a birth orally, the notifier is obliged to prove his/her identity. In accordance with Article 20 of implementing decree of the Ministry of Interior No. 302/1994 Coll., on the oral notification of the birth of a child, the registrar and the notifier draw up minutes in which data on all facts to be entered in the register office must be entered. The entry of a child whom its mother left after giving birth in a healthcare facility and where the mother also requested in writing to keep her identity confidential in connection with the birth, will be entered in the birth book based on the report of the doctor who assisted during the birth. If the parent does not take over the child's birth certificate within 40 days from the day of the child's birth, despite calls and a summons from the register office, the register office will report this fact to the competent SLPCSG guardianship authority (Article 28a of Decree of the Ministry of Interior No. 302/1994 Coll.)

3. What measures are taken in your country to address vulnerabilities related to the gender dimension of human trafficking?

Ministry of Interior:

Article 3(2) of Act No. 274/2017 Coll. on victims of crime and on the amendment to certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the “Act on Victims of Crime”) states that “the rights granted to the victim by this Act are applied without discrimination based on sex, religion or belief, race, nationality or ethnic group, health condition, age, sexual orientation, marital status, skin colour, language, political or other mentality, national or social origin, property or other position”.

The Ministry of Interior covers a **specialised Assistance Programme** through the IC MI SR, which is responsible for this specialised programme. The Assistance Programme is regulated in the internal regulation of the Ministry of Interior No. 161/2020 on ensuring the support and protection programme for victims of THB (hereinafter referred to as the “Order on the Assistance Programme”), which is specifically aimed only at victims of THB, and thus the services provided are tailored for this group of victims. **The basic objectives of the programme are the provision of services in accordance with the protection of human rights and freedoms of victims of THB.** The victim of THB is motivated to cooperate with the law enforcement authorities in order to punish the perpetrators of the crime of THB. In the event that there is a suspicion that a person may have become a victim of THB, he/she can voluntarily decide to enter the Assistance Programme, from which it is possible to provide the services that the victim of THB needs in view of their current situation. Cooperation with the police is not a condition for a victim of THB to enter the programme. The financing of the programme is carried out from the budget of the Ministry of Interior, and specific services are provided by the non-governmental sector, with which the Ministry of Interior has a valid and effective contract - the SCC and the Greek Catholic Charity Prešov (hereinafter referred to as the “GCC”). The Assistance Programme also provides the victim of THB with the opportunity to decide whether to cooperate with law enforcement authorities, within the framework of the recovery and reflection period, which is understood as the time for the victim of THB to remove himself/herself from the influence of the offender and to consider the circumstances and context for acceptance of an informed decision on cooperation with law enforcement authorities, lasting no more than 90 days. Even if he/she does not decide to do so, care is provided to him/her in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination. If a victim of THB cooperates with law enforcement authorities, crisis care is provided to him/her throughout the criminal proceedings for the THB crime, and in justified cases also for a reasonable time after the end of the criminal proceedings for the THB crime. In the event that a victim of THB included in the Assistance Programme decides to cooperate with law enforcement authorities and acts are carried out with him/her in criminal proceedings, before the first act, the investigator, in accordance with internal procedures, ensures that the victim of THB is informed directly by the non-governmental sector about the length of his/her stay in this specialised programme. A victim of THB who appears as a victim in criminal proceedings is informed about the Assistance Programme in this way as well and can decide on his/her entry. This measure ensures the greatest possible support for victims of THB, also due to the need for legal advice. Each service within the programme is patiently explained to the victim of THB and is performed only after the consent of the victim of THB has been granted. As part of the Assistance Programme, victims of THB can be provided mainly with isolation from the criminal environment, suitable and safe accommodation, assistance with assisted voluntary return, social assistance, psychological counselling, psychotherapeutic services, interpretation and translation services, legal advice, healthcare, retraining services, and the possibility of one-time financial compensation. Slovak and foreign victims of THB who enter the Assistance Programme can be provided with healthcare coverage that other aid mechanisms in the SR do not allow. In the case of child victims of THB entering the Assistance Programme, the procedures are adjusted in accordance with the best interest of the child. However, the legal guardian decides on the child’s entry into the programme. The last update of the THB victim assistance and support system was implemented in 2020, with changes effective from 1 January 2021. As part of the amendment, the provisions regarding child victims of THB and the identification process were specified in more detail. The range of services

provided to citizens of the SR, as well as to foreigners, or to stateless persons as victims of THB, are set out in the Assistance Programme regulation and are based on both international standards and binding EU legislation. **Comprehensive care for victims of THB is provided in accordance with the principle of equality and non-discrimination, with due regard for the individual needs of individual victims, respecting their basic human rights.** The provision of professional assistance and support to victims of THB, included in the Assistance Programme, is continuously contractually ensured until 2027. In 2022, based on the result of public procurement, the Ministry of Interior concluded a contract with the non-governmental organisations SCC and GCC.

The output of three separately implemented public procurements is:

- ensuring the operation of the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818,
- providing pre-return assistance and assisted voluntary return to victims of THB,
- provision of professional help and support to victims of THB on a 24-hour basis, continuously on the territory of the SR, assistance to men, women and children in their return to normal life, in their integration into society, successful entry and retention on the labour market, support in the upbringing and education of children.

The Ministry of Interior is making intensive efforts in terms of spreading awareness about the issue of THB, existing tools and possibilities for solving this issue in the conditions of the SR.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

An important part of the elimination of any risk is risk prevention. A significant role in this area is played by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (hereafter referred to as the “SNCHR”). One of its several competences granted by Act No. 308/1993 Coll. about the establishment of the SNCHR includes educational activities. In particular, the SNCHR provides THB education targeted at children and youth as well as adult participants. The content also includes preventing the temporary job from becoming a “nightmare”.

Strategic materials play an important role in prevention among the factors that condition the risks of THB. The **National strategy for equality between women and men and equal opportunities in the SR for the years 2021-2027** identifies the problem of THB and related forced marriages, as well as the greater vulnerability of women and girls.

In the framework of prevention, from a broader perspective, the **role of the CMC is also irreplaceable**, as it ensures professional coordination of activities through methodological guidelines for the provision of services in the field of primary prevention, as well as the elimination of violence against women and children. The CMC provides the National Hotline for Women Experiencing Violence. The task of this line is to provide help and necessary information for women and their children. The services provided by this line are based on the needs of women who have experienced violence in their lives. In a situation where a woman and her children are threatened, the professional staff operating the line for women experiencing violence will provide crisis assistance and all the necessary information. Professional staff are ready to talk about all kinds of violence that women encounter in their lives. The National Hotline for Women Experiencing Violence is therefore the point of first contact, where women are provided with all important information about violence against women, especially violence in intimate relationships. Professional staff also answer basic questions about legal aid and provide assistance in finding additional help in the region where the woman is staying.

From the point of view of the strategic materials of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the **National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women for the years 2022-2027** within Priority Area No. 4 – Effective prosecution of violence against women contains Task No. 4.5.: Increase in the number of detected and prosecuted cases of THB with women and forced marriages outside and within the SR.

OGPRC:

On 22 November 2022, the Programme “Slovakia 2021 – 2027” (the official name of the document SK - Program Slovensko - SK - ERDF/CF/JTF/ESF+) was approved by the European Commission, which determines the strategic priorities and goals of the SR for the European structural and investment funds until 2030. Part of Policy Objective 4 – A More Social Europe is also the priority Active Inclusion of Roma Communities, within which a specific objective is set: ESO4.10 Supporting socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, such as the Roma (ESF+). It defines key activities in the field of inclusive growth of employment by increasing employment, skills, including digital skills of residents of MRC. The measures within the specific objective ESO4.10 include motivating Roma girls and women to a higher participation in education, the labour market and also in programmes of better housing conditions and health. This measure will be implemented through demand-oriented calls, within which primary non-governmental organisations that develop and implement interventions aimed at supporting Roma women and girls will be supported. It should result in a higher participation of young Roma women in education and improved housing and health conditions, including preventive education in these areas. Indirectly, this measure will have the effect of reducing the risk of women becoming subject to THB. The Programme Slovakia 2021 - 2027 is published on the website of the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation”) in the Slovak language: https://www.eurofondy.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/221115_PSK_Final.pdf (pages 403 et seq.)

On 6 April 2022, the Government of the SR adopted Resolution No. 256/2022 with **Action Plans for the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for the years 2022-2024**. As part of the adopted measures aimed at women and girls from MRC, the aim of which is, among other things, to empower them and thus also reduce their vulnerability, the activities within the priority **area of Education** include:

- Activity 1.3.3 - implement the lower secondary vocational education programme with an integral part of primary school completion and determination of the highest number of lower secondary vocational education pupils to ensure continuity of lower secondary vocational education (Slovak Qualifications Framework 2) graduates in secondary vocational education (Slovak Qualifications Framework 3) in the higher year of study, with emphasis on supporting women with parental

responsibilities under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport

- Activity 1.4.1 - improve the delivery of second-chance education to increase the number of institutions offering education and the proportion of second-chance education graduates, taking into account the needs of women with parental responsibilities under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport
- Activity 1.4.4 - implement career guidance and education programmes in kindergartens, primary and secondary school taking into account the specific needs of pupils from MRC and the needs of women with parental responsibilities

Within the priority **area of Employment**, activities under the coordination of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

- Activity 1.5.1 - implement activities to support the acquisition of secondary vocational education (H-specialisation) for girls and women from MRC with the aim of eliminating negative stereotypes regarding the status of Roma women related to studying only in lower secondary vocational education (F- specialisation)
- Activity 1.5.3 - provide targeted career counselling for MRC through Guidance Centres with the aim: - guide their careers towards promising fields of specialisation, including the social

sphere, healthcare and general government - increase the supply of apprenticeship courses for girls and women from MRC to prevent them from entering only F-specialisations, which are based on negative stereotypes about the status of Roma women

- Activity 1.5.4 - educational activities to strengthen the participation of Roma girls and women in education and the labour market
- Activity 3.1.1 - provide financial support for the activation of persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including MRC and especially women, by increasing interest in entrepreneurship
- Activity 4.1.3 - implement activities for young people entering the labour market to raise their awareness of protection against discrimination in the context of equality between men and women and reconciliation of family and working life
- Activity 4.2.1 - implement support programmes for women, including women from MRC, affected by multiple discrimination upon their return to employment
- Activity 4.2.2 - implement activities (awareness-raising) to break down negative stereotypes related to the traditional division of social roles.

Within the priority area of Combating Anti-Roma Racism and Promoting Participation:

- Activity 1.2.1 - implement awareness-raising activities for the population from MRC on the observance of the principle of equal treatment under the coordination of the SNCHR
- Activity 2.7.1 - taking into account the specific situation of Roma women when providing assistance to victims of domestic violence in intervention centres under the coordination of the Ministry of Justice
- Activity 2.7.2 - In regions with a high representation of MRC, provide information in easily understandable language and in the Roma language – within the services provided by intervention centres under the coordination of the Ministry of Justice.

The Action Plans are published on the website of the OGPRC in the Slovak language: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategia-pre-rovnost-inkluziu-a-participaciu-romov-do-roku-2030/>;

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556 and in the English language:

<https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategy-of-equality-inclusion-and-participation-of-roma-until-2030/>;

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1526/action_plans_2022_2024_of_the_strategy_of_equality_inclusion_and_participation_of_roma_until_2030-1.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556

In 2023, the **Monitoring Report for 2022** was published **together with an appendix**, further information is provided in the answer to question 2 e).

4. What specific measures are taken to reduce the vulnerability to trafficking of persons from disadvantaged minorities? Please provide information on policies and measures in the following areas:

- a. research;

OGPRC:

In 2022, the OGPRC published the results of a **thematic survey** conducted by an external entity - **Financial Inclusion of Marginalised Roma**. The publication presents the outputs of qualitative research focused on the issue of financial literacy and financial inclusion of the MRC population in the SR. The focus was on the availability of financial products or services, financial education and suggestions for recommendations to improve financial inclusion. From the baseline analysis of the state of financial literacy and the socio-geographical structure of the SR, a selection of four localities with MRC was made, with the aim of mapping specific financial inclusion tools and their effectiveness in the given conditions. The field research took the form of semi-structured

interviews with members of marginalised households, representatives of local government, financial institutions, field social workers, legal aid workers, the non-profit sector and volunteers working in the study area. The evaluation of the information gathered resulted in a set of practical recommendations at the level of legislative changes, financial institutions, as well as the way of providing financial inclusion tools, including recommendations on selected financial products of banks and insurance companies. The thematic survey report is published in Slovak on the OGPRC website:

https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1276/tz_financne_zaclenenie_vnutro_final.pdf

A study conducted by an external entity for the OGPRC in 2022 presents the outputs of a **thematic survey focused on barriers to the entry of marginalised Roma into the labour market**. Emphasis was placed on mapping and typologically disaggregating the barriers to Roma employment within the specific, socio-economic and infrastructural conditions of the six selected localities. Through semi-structured interviews with successful and unsuccessful job seekers, employers and employment intermediaries, practical problems of their employment were identified. The output included local and national recommendations for increasing Roma employment. The thematic survey report is published in Slovak on the OGPRC website:

https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1276/tematicke_zistovanie_-_bariery_pri_vstupe_marginalizovanych_romov_na_trh_prace.pdf

In the second half of 2022, the OGPRC published an **Analysis of absenteeism and measures to reduce absenteeism from compulsory school attendance**. The analysis looked at the impact of frequent absenteeism on pupils' academic performance and their future career prospects on the labour market. It analysed the arrangements for excusing absences in the legislation of selected countries in Europe, as well as the impact of two specific policies on pupils' attendance in Slovakia - the possibility to excuse three consecutive days by parents without a doctor's confirmation and a modification (originally an anti-pandemic measure) extending the number of such days excused by parents to five. The conclusion contains recommendations that could help address the issue of frequent absenteeism, drawn from good practice abroad and recommendations from the schools in the questionnaire survey. The analysis noted the negative impact of frequent absenteeism (both excused and unexcused) on the higher repetition of grades among absent pupils, the lower level of knowledge among these pupils, and the concentration of these problems in schools that are mostly or completely segregated. The above recommendations also included possible legislative changes. The analysis was shared with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport at the Conference on How to Ensure a Systematic Approach to Early Childhood Care in Slovakia (8 November 2022, Bratislava, the conference was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Ministry of Health, representatives of relevant partners from the non-profit sector, representatives of UNESCO, foreign partners from Hungary; see more at:

<https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/archiv-tlacovych-sprav/usvrk-organizoval-konferenciu-o-systematickom-pristupe-k-ranej-starostlivosti-pre-deti-na-slovensku/>), as well as directly with a representative of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, recommending legislation to regulate frequent truancy in order to prevent deteriorating results, attendance and substandard education. The analysis is published in Slovak on the OGPRC website:

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1135/analyza_absencii.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556

In July 2022, the OGPRC published an **Analysis of the Existence and Functioning of Two-Shift Operations and Primary School Capacity in the 2021 School Year**. Two-shift operations are a long-standing phenomenon in the Slovak education system - in this system, two shifts alternate in the classroom, with one having the educational process in the morning and the other in the afternoon. This system is mainly introduced by schools due to the lack of space, which prevents the normal, single-shift operation of the school. On the basis of questionnaire, telephone and field research in the Prešov and Košice regions (regions with the presence of primary schools with two-shift operation), several problems with this method of teaching have been identified and are presented in the chapters on the findings from the questionnaire and the findings from the field data collection. Their impacts on pupils,

schools, the communities and municipalities in which pupils live, as well as on the education system as a whole, are also part of the analysis presented here. More detailed information on the analysis itself is published on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/analyzy/usvrk-zanalyzoval-dvojzmennost-prevadzok-na-zakladnych-skolach-1/>.

The analysis is published in Slovak on the OGPRC website: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1135/analyza_existencie_a_fungovania_dvojzmennych_prevadzok_a_kapacit_zs_v_sk.pdf. The analysis was shared with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport at the Conference on How to Ensure a Systematic Approach to Early Childhood Care in Slovakia (8 November 2021, Bratislava, participants included representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the Ministry of Health, representatives of relevant partners from the non-profit sector, representatives of UNESCO, foreign partners from Hungary; see more at: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/archiv-tlacovych-sprav/usvrk-organizoval-konferenciu-o-systematickom-pristupe-k-ranej-starostlivosti-pre-deti-na-slovensku/>), at the conference People Matter - for a Dignified and Quality Life of the Inhabitants of Slovakia (28 and 29 March 2023, Horný Smokovec; see more at: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/konferencia-2023-na-ludoch-zalez/>).

In the **Action Plans for the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for the years 2022-2024**, in the priority area of Combating Anti-Roma Racism and Promoting Participation under measure 1.3 Improve application and compliance with Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and on the amendment to certain acts (Anti-Discrimination Act) in practice, activity 1.3.2 is planned for 2023, i.e. “Develop an analysis of the risks of indirect and multiple discrimination specifically focusing on the rights of women and other vulnerable groups, including youth under 26 and children”. The analysis is currently under preparation. The Action Plans are published on the website of the OGPRC in the Slovak language: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategia-pre-rovnost-inkluziu-a-participaciu-romov-do-roku-2030/>;

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556 and in the English language: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategy-of-equality-inclusion-and-participation-of-roma-until-2030/>;

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1526/action_plans_2022_2024_of_the_strategy_of_equality_inclusion_and_participation_of_roma_until_2030-1.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556

- b. information, awareness-raising and education campaigns;

Ministry of Interior:

From 2019 to 2021, the Ministry of Interior implemented a nationwide awareness-raising billboard campaign to increase awareness of THB under the title “*Don't close your eyes to it!*” The campaign was aimed at raising awareness of the existence of the National Helpline for THB victims 0800 800 818. The campaign was implemented through online banners on websites with a national reach, both on news portals and on personal portals (containing chat and job advertisements) to raise awareness of THB issues among the general public. The aim of publishing the banners was to best reach the target group (the target group includes people mainly from poor social backgrounds, with primary and secondary education, looking for work). The campaign was also run on Facebook with a precisely specified target group. The effectiveness of the campaign was translated into an increased number of calls to the above Helpline.

In 2020, the Ministry of Interior ensured the production and printing of promotional materials with the number of the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818, the printing of an information leaflet on the rights of THB victims in criminal proceedings and the printing of a self-identification leaflet in

an eight-language version. The above materials were distributed to non-governmental organisations, the BBFP P PF, the MO MI SR and for prevention purposes to schools and various events organised by the coordinators of prevention for child protection from violence.

On the basis of the cooperation of the IC MI SR with the coordinator of the protection of children from violence within the National Project “Support of Child Protection against Violence”, an educational exhibition of paintings focusing on the issue of THB perceived through the eyes of pupils of secondary art schools entitled “Do you know what your child is doing now?” was carried out in 2020.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the National Coordination Centre for Tackling Violence against Children implemented a campaign on the issue of forced marriages against children, which was shared on the websites of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the National Coordination Centre for Tackling Violence against Children. The campaign appeared in various media and was shared on the websites of several cities and municipalities. The output of this campaign was a leaflet and brochure defining the identifying characteristics of victims of child arranged marriages. Their aim is to highlight the risk factors that could lead to child trafficking, as all the child’s rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child must be respected when assessing the best interests of the child. The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, has made available to all schools in the SR an infographic on THB and summer jobs.

The Ministry of Interior, through EUROPOL, also approached the Australian state institution eSafety, thanks to which the brochure “COVID-19 Pandemic: Advice on Online Safety for Parents” was created. Under one chapter on Unwanted Contact and Grooming, the contact details for the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818 are listed, amongst others. The brochure was also sent electronically by personal letter to all employees of the Ministry of Interior.

In 2022, the Ministry of Interior organised a nationwide campaign in cooperation with Slovnaft, a. s. The preventive information campaign, aimed at combating THB, was launched at 255 Slovnaft a.s. petrol stations across Slovakia. The aim of this campaign was to minimise the number of THB victims. The campaign tool was stickers on the mirrors of the men’s and women’s toilets of each Slovnaft, a.s. petrol station, which included terms describing the crime of THB and an A5 information leaflet with a male and female face with information on self-identification of THB victims and help contacts. The campaign materials also included information in Ukrainian for those leaving Ukraine and a telephone number, 0800 800 818, for the national helpline.

In 2022, departments of the MI SR joined the campaign to combat THB for sexual exploitation, which was created by the General Directorate for Combating Organised Crime of the Ministry of Interior of Bulgaria, with the support of the EMPACT platform, which is part of EUROPOL. The aim of the campaign was to draw the attention of the public and vulnerable groups to the ways of engaging in THB, the identification and support of victims, as well as the client side.

In 2022, the Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the OGPRC, developed a bilingual information material (leaflet), focusing on forced marriages. Information is provided in the answer to question 2(a).

In 2022, the Ministry of Interior published information material for persons arriving from Ukraine on the risks of THB, translating it into the Roma language in cooperation with the OGPRC. The information material was published in 6 languages and distributed to the relevant entities in connection with the arrival of persons from Ukraine. The information material is published on the website of the Ministry of Interior: <https://www.minv.sk/?zakladne-informacie-6>

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

Measures taken to reduce the vulnerability of persons from disadvantaged minorities to THB, information on policies and measures in these areas are supported by the basic acts - Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on the SLPCSG and on the amendment to certain acts, Act No. 417/2013 Coll. on aid in material need, Act No. 544/2010 Coll. on subsidies under the competence of the Ministry of Labour, Social

Affairs and Family, Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services and on the amendment to certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the “Act on Employment Services”). The methodological instructions and guidelines addressed to the staff of the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and CCFs, which are under the management responsibility of the CLSAF and whose activities are coordinated and directly managed by the CLSAF, are preferably based on the above acts.

The CLSAF pays special attention to the processes of identification, prevention, assistance and protection of victims of THB in the framework of workshops, methodological days and staff training, with a focus on proactive identification of groups at risk and awareness raising on the possibilities of protection, assistance and support for victims of THB.

Separate information or awareness-raising campaigns have not been organised within the competence of the CLSAF, as the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the institutions for the enforcement of court decisions are involved in the dissemination of awareness and information on the above-mentioned issues rather through internal educational or training activities and methodological guidance, within which awareness, promotional or training materials of other institutions dealing with the above-mentioned issue are used (e.g. the IC MI SR, National Coordination Centre for the Protection of Children from Violence, IOM...etc.).

Information leaflets and other awareness-raising materials issued by the Ministry of Interior were distributed to the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, e.g. **“I am not for sale”**, **“It can’t happen to me”** **“Don’t become a victim of human traffickers”** in Slovak and Ukrainian language versions, **IOM manual “Using the mobile Application SAFE Travel & Work Abroad”**, IOM training manual **“Prevention of THB”**, contacts to non-stop helplines, e.g. National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818, Toll-free telephone line of the CLSAF.

OGPRC:

On 8 November 2022, the OGPRC organised the conference in Bratislava on **How to Ensure a Systematic Approach to Early Childhood Care in Slovakia**. Participants of the conference were representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, non-governmental and academic sector, as well as foreign guests - representatives of the government and academic sector from Hungary. The conference contributed to the creation of a platform for the exchange of experience and know-how in the field of early childhood care. In 2023, it will be followed up by the OGPRC with the creation of an inter-ministerial platform to map the challenges faced by organisations providing early care for marginalised and segregated populations, to identify possible intersections in addressing them, and to align on a strategy for the provision of quality and standardised early care services in these communities. See more information on the conference on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/archiv-tlacovych-sprav/usvrk-organizoval-konferenciu-o-systematickom-pristupe-k-ranej-starostlivosti-pre-deti-na-slovensku/>

In 2022, the OGPRC actively cooperated with the Ministry of Interior in the preparation of information materials, see the answer to question 2(a) for more details.

In June 2023, the OGPRC cooperated with the Slovak Red Cross on the translation of the **information material “Looking for a missing relative? Safety advice for families”**, into the Roma language. The information material will be used by the Slovak Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross in the framework of awareness raising on the Protection of Family Links and Connecting Families programmes. More information about the programme can be found on the Slovak Red Cross website: <https://redcross.sk/restoring-family-links/>

In the **Action Plans for the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for the years 2022-2024**, in the priority area of Combating Anti-Roma Racism and Promoting Participation under sub-objective “3 Strengthen the participation of Roma and Roma women at all

levels”, measure “3.8 Raise awareness of successful cases in the fight against anti-Roma racism and discrimination”, the following activities are defined:

- 3.8.1 Campaign to raise awareness of successful cases in the fight against anti-Roma racism and discrimination, the OGPRC in cooperation with the SNCHR are responsible entities and the activity is planned for 2023 and 2024.
- 3.8.2 Regular monthly column on the fight against anti-Roma racism and discrimination in Slovakia.

Since 2022, the OGPRC has been publishing an anti-discrimination column on its website <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/antidiskriminacna-rubrika/> as well as promoting the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities on the social network <https://www.facebook.com/splnomocnenecRK>.

c. socio-economic initiatives targeting underlying and structural causes;

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

Field social work is considered one of the key tools in the field of social inclusion - because of the full range of activities carried out by field social workers and field workers for the benefit of vulnerable individuals and groups. As practice shows, the importance of field social work is considerable for municipalities, to which the obligation to provide or arrange social services for their inhabitants has been transferred. As a result of the decentralisation of social services, municipalities have to face a vast array of local problems and difficulties - assisting with social integration, education programmes, housing, health, etc. These reasons are also the motivation why the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family continues to support the performance of field social work and intends to continue to do so in the future. The importance of field social work lies, among other things, in the fact that it is implemented directly in the natural environment of the clients. Field work in MRC represents an important instrument of social inclusion of individuals and groups. Field social workers and field workers act as mediators between the expectations of the established society and the possibilities or abilities of individuals facing several forms of deprivation and marginalisation. The disadvantages also cause and result in low social capital and generally the ability to cope with everyday problems from provision of food, living or basic hygiene, through the mediation of contact with offices, local authorities, to assistance in case of financial problems connected with usury. This is also confirmed by data, when the most frequent categories of activities of field social workers and field workers included the categories of facilitation of communication between the client and other entities, consulting concerning finances, consulting in the area of provision of basic living needs, health consulting. We also support the target group of homeless people through field social work.

Community centres represent another instrument, which can effectively coordinate various intervention programmes at local level and provide comprehensive social and community services according to specific needs of target groups. The mission of community centres is to contribute to social inclusion of socially excluded people, both at individual and local levels, through the provision of comprehensive social and community services. Nowadays, community centres are defined in Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on social services, as amended, as a social service, which means that by registering a community centre in the register of providers of social services, an instrument is created for the verification of operation, control and quality of services provided by community centres. Implementation of the project and registration of community centres as a social service helped unify and harmonise the operation of community centres according to uniform principles. In the case of the target group of homeless people, social services are supported, e.g. also in low-threshold day centres. Field social workers and field workers or other workers of crisis intervention social services have some knowledge about THB topics and there is certainly room for cooperation in ensuring their participation in thematic trainings, e.g. on methods and procedures, how to act preventively, how to help prevent

THB and how and to whom to turn in cases where they suspect THB. Educational trainings on the topic of THB have been previously implemented in cooperation with the IOM in the first phase of the first project, the National Project Field Social Workers I. For the effective and especially safe performance of field social work, we consider it necessary to keep the interaction between field social workers and field workers at the level of discreet cooperation, if they encounter something like this in their activities. Collaboration on the topics in question would enable the Department of Social Services, as the expert coordinator of national projects aimed at the development of selected social services for crisis intervention (e.g. community centres, low-threshold day centres) and support for field social workers working in MRC and with homeless people, to train staff in the field of THB more effectively, thus contributing to the elimination of threats to the identified groups, which include Slovak women and children of Roma origin, who are often victims of THB. Any professional training that will contribute to improving the quality of the work of social workers in the field is desirable and welcome.

The first ever **National Concept for Preventing and Ending Homelessness by 2023** was also adopted in the SR in 2023. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family has prepared a draft National Concept for Preventing and Ending Homelessness approved by the Government of the SR at its meeting on 12 April 2023. It is both a comprehensive view and a vision for 2030 to help create and improve conditions for the reintegration of homeless people into mainstream life and preventive measures to prevent homelessness. Homelessness, where people have lost stable and suitable housing as a result of a particular life situation or are currently unable to secure it, and exclusion from housing are the most extreme manifestations of poverty and social exclusion. The proposed Concept is the first strategic material to ensure that the state works and takes measures in different areas that are necessary to tackle homelessness and affect people who find themselves in a vulnerable living situation on the streets. The prepared Concept will be followed by an Action Plan with a maximum time horizon of 5 years. This will provide concrete measures to help people to avoid homelessness and loneliness in the most effective and measurable way. Link: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/sk/rodina-socialna-pomoc/socialne-sluzby/prevencia-ukoncovanie-bezdomovstva/narodna-koncepcia-prevencie-ukoncovania-bezdomovstva.pdf>

The Concept as well as the Action Plan includes a section 5.6 Governance Area which highlights the abuse of homeless people. Perpetrators are often coerced by force or manipulation into the role of “straw man”. Such homeless people become partners in limited liability companies and it is impossible to dissolve the business and remove them from the commercial register. These persons end up serving sentences for embezzlement, non-payment of taxes, etc. They remain completely without financial resources, because as partners in the companies they are not even entitled to benefits in material need. Another problem is trafficking in homeless people, but this is very difficult to prove. Luring people to lucrative jobs, waiting outside social services facilities with offers of work abroad, borrowing documents while they sign a contract, etc. The Action Plan aims to respond to this area with a specific measure. The preparation of the action plan is currently in process.

Employees of Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family are legally obliged to check on an ongoing basis whether the social allowances awarded by the state are used for the purpose specified by law. In case of suspicion of their unauthorised use or misuse, the staff of the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family are obliged to verify the fact and subsequently act in accordance with the relevant legislation.

In order to prevent the withdrawal of state social allowances from victims, a **special recipient** is designated by law. The method of exercising the special recipient is not defined by law, but the aim is that the statutory purpose of the allowance is actually used for that purpose. The special recipient operates comprehensively in terms of all state social allowances. In practice, this means that if the special recipient is designated to receive, for example, a benefit in material need, they are also automatically designated to receive parental allowance, child benefit or other benefits. **Practice shows that victims themselves often proactively request the appointment of a special recipient.**

The CLSAF stated in this regard that the implementation of measures to eliminate the causes of any threat to children or adults (including THB) is carried out continuously and comprehensively, as it is based on legal obligations (Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on the SLPCSG and on the amendment to certain acts). In the very subject of regulation, the act defines the SLPCSG as a set of measures aimed at ensuring the prevention of crisis situations in the family, protection of the rights and legally protected interests of children, prevention of deepening and recurrence of disorders of psychological development, physical development and social development of children and adult individuals, prevention of the increase of socio-pathological phenomena.

In the area of assistance to real or latent victims of THB, the SLPCSG authorities act in accordance with the above-mentioned SLPCSG Act, which imposes the obligation to propose, as part of the measures to be taken, the implementation or provision of professional methods to assist children or adult individuals who have been victims of THB. Performance of measures is focused on the provision of social consulting, field work and social work, mediation of participation in programmes focused on assistance to THB victims; psychological consulting and psychological assistance is provided in the remediation of the biological family. Assistance and support is also provided to persons who are included in the Assistance Programme under the competence of the Ministry of Interior.

In 2022, only one case of a minor and one case of an adult who were indicated as suspected victims of THB were registered by the SLPCSG authorities.

In case the all-round development and upbringing of a minor child is/may be seriously endangered due to the possible risk that the child has become a victim of THB, in addition to the provision of outpatient or field measures by the SLPCSG, it is possible to place the minor child in a facility for the execution of a court decision, with specialised separate groups for victims of THB (currently e.g. CCF Sečovce).

In the field of social affairs, a social system is set up by the state to help citizens **through the provision of state social benefits, assistance in material need as well as child subsidies**. These forms of assistance respond to personal factors of vulnerability to THB e.g. age, disability, gender, situational factors of vulnerability which include poverty, socio-economic disadvantage, unemployment, lack of income, contextual factors of vulnerability related e.g. to the war in Ukraine, loss of home and income, barriers to accessing assistance and services - a vulnerable person is an easy target for THB.

For vulnerable citizens whose income does not reach the minimum subsistence level, a **system of providing assistance in material need** has been established. (Act No 417/2013 Coll. on assistance in material need and on the amendment to certain acts). Assistance in material need is a benefit, a protection allowance, an allowance for a dependent child, an activation allowance and a housing allowance. Beneficiaries of assistance in material need are insured by the state for health insurance, i.e. they have free access to health care.

Support for families with children in kindergarten and primary school is provided through the provision of a subsidy to support the child's nutritional habits. In primary school and in the last year of kindergarten, a subsidy is provided, which is intended for the purchase of school supplies for children from households that receive assistance in material need or whose income is no more than the minimum subsistence level (Act No. 544/2010 Coll. on subsidies under the competence of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family).

State aid is also implemented through the provision of **state social benefits**, by which the state mainly supports families with children, e.g. child allowance, childbirth allowance, parental allowance, child care allowance, allowances for entrusting a child to foster family care, which are regulated in the relevant legislation.

In the field of employment, the obligations of the employer to be fulfilled when employing foreigners are laid down (Act on Employment Services).

Preventive protection against abuse and labour exploitation includes a measure on the "vacancy report" forms, by which the employer reports the vacancy to the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family - it contains a warning about the **prohibition of discrimination against job applicants**. When a

vacancy reported by the employer is accepted and included in the register of vacancies for job seekers and persons interested in employment, the details of the vacancy are checked to ensure that there are no discriminatory requirements imposed on prospective employees or particularly unfavourable working conditions (working hours, wages).

Before issuing a permit for seasonal employment of a third-country national, the reliability and seriousness of the employer is checked, whether the employer has fulfilled his/her tax obligations towards Slovak institutions and whether he/she has not violated the prohibition of illegal employment in the period of 5 years prior to the submission of the application for a work permit or a temporary residence permit, as well as the conditions of the accommodation provided for the employees are verified.

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

The SR will support the increase of the capacity of KGs and PSs through the calls of the Recovery and Resilience Plan and will support the elimination of the double-shift operation of primary schools through the calls of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

- Increasing the capacity of KGs: the objective of the Recovery and Resilience Plan is to build 9,107 places in KGs so that every child aged three years to compulsory school entry can participate in pre-primary education from 1 September 2025,
- Increasing the capacity of PSs: the call aims to increase capacity in PSs where the number of pupils exceeds their capacity, as well as to support the provision of equal access to education for all pupils and the removal of barriers to access to education,
- project support for the removal and actual removal of double-shift operation of PSs: the call aims to provide funding to applicants for the provision of a project to expand capacity in PSs through new buildings, extensions, additions and renovations to existing buildings. By the end of 2026, this should eliminate double-shift operation in at least 49 primary schools.

Amendment to the Education Act: the main objectives of the amendment are, among others, to reduce the proportion of pupils who do not reach even basic skills level, to reduce the socio-economic impact on pupils' educational outcomes and to promote equality of educational opportunity. Other objectives include increasing the proportion of pre-school age children participating in pre-primary education, reducing the school drop-out rate with a special focus on children with disabilities and social disadvantages, adapting education to the individual needs of each child, and reducing the rate of transfer of disadvantaged children from mainstream to special education.

The amendment also includes ensuring the conditions for the implementation of compulsory pre-primary education from the age of 5 and the introduction of a legal entitlement to a place in a KG or other providers of pre-primary education from the age of 3 - the introduction of a legal entitlement from the age of 3 so that every child from the age of 3 can be admitted to a nursery school or other provider of pre-primary education, if its parents express an interest in it, and thus it also includes a change in the financing of pre-primary education with earmarking of funds, which should replicate the current system of normative financing of primary schools (including special KGs) through the delegated competences of the state to municipalities and the financing of KGs from the state budget.

OGPRC:

The OGPRC implements several **national projects - Field social work and field work in municipalities with the presence of MRC II** (2 phases, 06/2017 – 12/2019; 11/2019 – 08/2023), **Community services in towns and municipalities with the presence of MRC - Phase II** (2 phases; 01/2016 – 12/2019, 11/2019 – 08/2023). Funding is provided through the Operational Programme Human Resources under Priority Axis 5, which focuses on the integration of MRC. The beneficiary of the national projects is the Government Office of the Slovak Republic and the implementer of the

national projects is the OGPRC. The outputs of the national projects Field Social Work and Community Services serve as the basis for the National Project Field Social Work and Community Centres, which will be implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the new programming period 2021-2027. The aim of these national projects is professional work on an individual level, as well as work with families, with a focus on MRC. The interventions implemented are aimed at empowering individuals, strengthening their competences and skills, sensitising public opinion and improving the quality of life of individuals and families.

The main objective of the project **Field social work and field work in municipalities with the presence of MRC** is to motivate and activate individuals and families to solve problems and adverse life situations. Clients are dealt with by field social workers and field workers with the intention of defining sensitisation and preventive measures of social exclusion and various other socially risky phenomena. The activities of field social workers and field workers are aimed at reducing inequalities, unequal access to services and, last but not least, at increasing the social competences of clients. Activities are implemented through interventions in areas such as employment, housing, finance and management, health, education and social services. The project is or has been implemented in 168 municipalities, most of which are located in Eastern Slovakia. The work of 257 field social workers and field workers has contributed, among other things, to improved quality of life, better coping with life and social events, greater independence, learning new things, improved level of communication with MRC citizens and networking of services. Interventions were provided to about 70 thousand clients. See more on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/narodny-projekt-terenna-socialna-praca-a-terenna-praca-v-obciach-s-pritomnostou-marginalizovanych-romskych-komunit-ii/>

Social services of crisis intervention, which are provided within the framework of the national project **Community services in towns and municipalities with the presence of MRC**, are intended to help in situations when a person does not have the necessary conditions to meet his/her subsistence needs; when his/her inclusion in society is threatened due to threatening life habits, addictions or other harmful activities; due to adverse health condition; or due to remaining in a spatially segregated locality with the presence of concentrated and generational poverty. These are the Community Centre, the Low Threshold Day Centre and the Low Threshold Social Service for Children and Families. The services provided in these facilities include, on a monthly basis, mainly basic and specialised social counselling, assistance in exercising rights and legally protected interests, preventive activities, leisure activities, assistance in preparing for school and support for non-formal education of children, young people and adults, individual and group community rehabilitation of adults and the implementation of community activities for the general public with the aim of sensitising public opinion. The main outputs of the project are, among others, the strengthening of social competences in the field of parental control, the improvement of the relationship to regular school attendance and performance of the clients, the strengthening of the system of civil control in the sense of prevention of social pathology and deviance. A total of 295 employees (of whom 75 are Roma men and women) work in MRC and map their needs directly in the field. With a professional approach, they have helped more than 26,000 people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 103 community centres, low-threshold day centres and low-threshold social services for children and families. See more on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/komunitne-sluzby-v-mestach-a-obciach-s-pritomnostou-marginalizovanych-romskych-komunit-ii-faza/>

The OGPRC implemented the national project **Support for the settlement of legal relations to land in municipalities with the presence of MRC** in the period 10/2016 - 08/2023. The project was implemented within the framework of the Operational Programme Human Resources and its Priority Axis 5 Integration of MRC, Investment Priority 5.1 Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma.

The national project “Support for the settlement of legal relations to land in municipalities with the presence of MRC” is the first project at national level, which aimed to settle land in settlements and

thus to improve the living conditions of the MRC population. The aim was for MRC residents to obtain legal title to the land under their dwellings or for the municipality to implement measures in settlements that would contribute to improving the standards of housing hygiene of the MRC residents. The acquisition of the legal relationship to the land under the dwellings enables the legalisation of the building occupied by the Roma; the construction of the dwelling; the acquisition of the legal relationship in favour of the municipality, which will subsequently implement measures on these plots that will contribute to the improved quality of the living conditions of MRC members (e.g. the possibility of establishing access to utilities). The national project “Support for the settlement of legal relations to land in municipalities with the presence of MRC” operated on a pilot basis in 148 municipalities. As of July 2023, partial land settlement - land transfer - has been achieved in 20 municipalities, while we register up to 801 dwellings in the process of land settlement and another 87 with completed settlement processes - i.e. processes for which a purchase contract or lease agreement has been concluded. Other land settlement processes in favour of MRC or municipality residents are ongoing, as this is a long and difficult process involving multiple actors and the success of the transaction depends on the ability of the resident to pay. See more about the national project on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/narodny-projekt-podpora-vysporiadania-pozemkov/>

The OGPRC within the framework of the **Programme Slovakia 2021 - 2027** is continuing the set activities related to the arrangement of legal relations to land through a new national project focused on the arrangement of property relations to land in municipalities with the presence of MRC called **Assistance to municipalities with the presence of MRC in the arrangement of legal relations to land under settlements**. The National Project is planned for the period 09/2023 - 08/2026. Compared to the previous project, this National Project focuses on strengthening the internal staff capacity of the project, which will be able to ensure the implementation of activities in the field right from the start of the project, without the need for lengthy procurement procedures. The project will also significantly strengthen the capacity of the Land and Forestry Departments of the most exposed district offices, in order to speed up and streamline the process of simple land adjustments. See more about the national project on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/narodny-projekt-asistencia-obciam-s-pritomnostou-marginalizovanych-romskych-komunit-pri-usporiadani-pravných-vztahov-k-pozemkom/> a https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1690/5_np_asistencia_obciam_pri_usporiadani_pozemkov_-_zamer.pdf

Within the framework of the **Operational Programme Human Resources, Priority Axis 6** Technical facilities in municipalities with the presence of MRC, Investment Priority 6.1 Providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas, several demand-oriented calls were announced.

- within Specific Objective 6.1.1 Growth in the number of the Roma households with access to improved housing conditions, calls to promote access to drinking water, road construction and reconstruction, waste management, transitional housing and the construction, expansion and reconstruction of sewerage systems
- within Specific Objective 6.1.2 Improving access to quality education, including education and care in early childhood, calls to construct and reconstruct KGs
- and within Specific Objective 6.1.3 Improving access of people from MRC to social infrastructure, calls to construct and reconstruct community centres.

The calls were announced by the Ministry of Interior as the intermediate body.

Summary of calls Priority Axis 5 and Priority Axis 6 – Catching-up Regions. Within the framework of the Operational Programme Human Resources, the Ministry of Interior announced a call for proposals aimed at supporting a comprehensive approach in municipalities with the presence of the MRC, co-financed by the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. The call was directed to 2 priority axes - Priority Axis 5 Integration of MRC and Priority Axis 6 Technical

facilities in municipalities with the presence of MRC. It was intended for selected municipalities with the presence of MRC included in the Catching-up Regions Initiative. The Catching-up Regions Initiative is an initiative of the European Commission, implemented in cooperation with the World Bank. It is about helping “catching-up” or lagging regions. On the territory of Slovakia, the Prešov self-governing region is a pilot region, which is provided with technical assistance by the European Commission for this purpose during the preparation and implementation of the Action Plan for growth and employment of the Prešov self-governing region. The call supported a number of authorised activities, namely the activities of local civil order services, support for access to drinking water, completion of the municipal waste management system, remediation of illegal landfills, construction of roads, construction of kindergartens, as well as modernisation and reconstruction of community centres.

Summary of calls Priority Axes 5 and 8 – Local civil order services. Within Priority Axis 5 Integration of MRC, Investment Priority 5.1 Socio – economic integration of marginalised communities, such as the Roma and Specific Objective 5.1.2 Increasing financial literacy, employability and employment of marginalised communities, especially the Roma, and Priority Axis 8 REACT-EU, Investment Priority 8.1 Supporting recovery from the crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including its social consequences, and preparing for a green, digital and resilient economic recovery, and Specific Objective 8.1.1 Supporting recovery from the crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including its social consequences, and preparing for a green, digital and resilient economic recovery, calls were announced that focused on providing individualised support and assistance services with the aim of mitigating socio-economic impacts on persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including persons from the MRC environment by providing **local civil order services**.

The Operational Programme Human Resources is published on the website of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/esf/op-ludske-zdroje/revizia-op/revizia-12.0/op-lz-verzia-12-0.pdf>

On 22 November 2022, the **Programme “Slovakia 2021 – 2027”** (the official name of the document SK - Program Slovensko - SK - ERDF/CF/JTF/ESF+) was approved by the European Commission, which determines the strategic priorities and goals of the SR for the European structural and investment funds until 2030.

The total allocation under the Programme Slovakia for the support of Roma communities is EUR 907 million. Within this package, 399 million is allocated specifically for the inclusion of MRC and it is administered by the OGPRC, which has the status of an intermediate body. The remaining part of the allocation is managed by other ministries – in particular by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation.

Policy Objective 4 - A More Social Europe includes the priority Active inclusion of Roma communities, under which two specific objectives are set:

- RSO4.3. Supporting the socio-economic inclusion of marginalised communities, low-income households and disadvantaged groups, including people with special needs, through integrated actions, including housing and social services (ERDF)
- ESO4.10. Supporting socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, such as the Roma (ESF+).

The proposed investments in the Programme Slovakia under Policy 4 and Specific Objectives RSO4.3 and ESO4.10 aim to improve the inclusion and accelerate the socio-economic development of MRC to ensure their equal access to “mainstream” services in education, employment, housing, health and social care, as part of the efforts to improve the overall decent living conditions for the affected local communities in line with the principles of desegregation.

Investments under specific objective RSO4.3 are intended to support measures such as:

- civil and technical infrastructure in the municipalities involved in the project development teams - comprehensive solutions with emphasis on the nature of the needs and specific problems of localities
- self-help housing construction and other improved forms of housing
- reconstruction and construction of suitable forms of housing for socially deprived population groups with emphasis on MRC
- access to drinking water, support for the construction of sewerage networks and sustainable water management
- promoting the transition to a resource-efficient circular economy
- removing key bottlenecks in the road infrastructure and improving regional mobility through the modernisation and construction of class II and III roads
- improving equitable access to inclusive and quality education services.

Investments under specific objective ESO4.10 are intended to support measures such as:

- operation of strategic importance: ensuring integrated comprehensive approach to improving living conditions with emphasis on the nature of the needs and specific problems of the locations – see more on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/archiv-tlacovych-sprav/vyzva-narodny-projekt-rozvoje-timy-i-je-uz-zverejnená/>
- support for prevention and information programmes aimed at increasing civic responsibility and improving civic coexistence - more on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/archiv-tlacovych-sprav/vyzva-na-podporu-miestnych-obcianskych-a-preventivnych-sluzieb-je-uz-zverejnená/>
- providing legal aid, counselling and coordination support to municipalities with MRC with the settling of land ownership rights and the legalisation of dwellings, including simple land-use regulation – see more on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/archiv-tlacovych-sprav/vyzva-na-narodny-projekt-asistencia-obciam-s-pritomnostou-marginalizovanych-romskych-komunit-pri-usporiadani-pravných-vztahov-k/>
- motivating Roma girls and women to a higher participation in education, the labour market and also in programmes of better housing conditions and health
- activating young people in MRC by applying inclusive approach for successful integration into society
- institutional support and development of Roma and pro-Roma NGOs in the field of participation and involvement in public policies
- promoting mutual learning, desegregation and cohesion (combating anti-Roma racism)
- gathering and updating the data on the living conditions in MRC and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of measures in MRC – see more on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/archiv-tlacovych-sprav/vyzva-pre-narodny-projekt-monitorovanie-a-hodnotenie-inkluzivnych-politik-zameranych-na-romsku-populaciu-predovsetkym/>
- capacity building by providing technical assistance to municipalities to enhance synergies with other interventions at municipal level
- supporting the activation and development of work skills of the MRC population.

The Programme Slovakia is published on the website of the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation in the Slovak language: https://www.eurofondy.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/221115_PSK_Final.pdf.

d. education, vocational training and job placement programmes.

Ministry of Interior:

As mentioned in the answer to question 3 of the questionnaire, the IC MI SR is the coordinator of the Assistance Programme under which, among others, services such as retraining courses, job search, reintegration into society, etc. are provided to the identified victims of THB by the contracted SCC and GCC entities.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family: a part of the answer elaborated under question 4(c).

The CLSAF, as a follow-up to the question, said: the issue of cooperation in the field of identification, prevention and elimination of THB was included in the **21st International Conference Bridges in Social-Legal Protection, which took place on 26-28 April 2022** in Bratislava - hotel SOREA Regia. Invited representatives of the NUFIM BBFP P PF informed the participants (representatives of all Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and CCFs in the SR) about the current situation and risks that occur in the field of THB, about the procedures to be applied in the detection of this serious crime and the elimination of the consequences that threaten the victims of THB.

In the context of the war conflict in Ukraine and the refugee crisis, UNICEF provided **education on THB** aimed at developing skills to identify and communicate, in priority, with children, potential victims of THB, including training on practical communication skills and recommended techniques. A **two-day training** with foreign experts for SLPCSG employees of three key Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family - Michalovce, Humenné and Trebišov, effectively ensuring the implementation of SLPCSG measures in connection with the refugee crisis, and employees of the CLSAF, providing emergency services, was carried out in April 2022 in Vyšné Nemecké. It was attended by **20** employees of SLPCSG bodies.

In 2022 (October, November), thanks to the cooperation with UNICEF, the **Capacity Building education for social workers and other professionals working with children from Ukraine** was implemented **in the form of a two-day training**. A total of **42 employees of CCFs and Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of SLPCSG departments** attended the training in 5 groups.

Based on an initiative of the CLSAF, the need to intensify the prevention and training of employees of Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the field of THB was also emphasized in the focus and activities of the forthcoming **National Programme for 2024-2028**, which has in its strategic objectives embedded activities aimed at the implementation of targeted information activities and campaigns in the field of combating THB for a number of target groups in cooperation with civil society, international organisations, the private sector, at national and international level, with an emphasis on the online space, as well as the implementation of educational activities aimed at pedagogical and professional staff, psychologists and social workers on the topic of trafficking in human beings, with a specific focus on child victims, in cooperation with civil society. In accordance with the wording of law, pedagogical and professional staff also includes social pedagogues and school support teams.

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

The National Plan for Strengthening the Youth Guarantee in the Slovak Republic with a view to 2030 contains, among other things, measures of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

- Establishment of a preventive system for the prevention of school drop-out, whereby this measure will ensure the development of an early warning system for school drop-out, which includes the development of a methodology for identifying and working with groups of children and pupils who are at risk of finding themselves in a situation of “Not in Education, Employment or Training” when they leave education

- Developing and implementing regional prevention programmes, ensuring that prevention programmes are developed and disseminated to schools in order to reach pupils in their final years of schooling who are at risk of the “Not in Education, Employment or Training” situation or dropping out of school. Prevention programmes can be set up directly in the school environment, at municipal level, or in the environment of local or regional NGOs.

The SR Youth Strategy 2021-2028 contains measures to improve the situation of young people. For example, it calls for support to organisations that contribute to the development of young people through non-formal education in youth work, as well as to the implementation of the national youth policy. The strategy reflects, among other things, the fact that not all young people have a family background that leads them to be active in their leisure time, or that the financial burden of leisure activities is a barrier to participation in activities. These young people represent the most vulnerable group in relation to socio-pathological phenomena, succumbing to extremism and radicalism. This is why it is important to pay separate attention to community and low-threshold programmes and services aimed at working with unorganised youth in leisure time, including housing-estate and rural youth. It also responds to the need to raise awareness of the responsible and safe use of digital technologies.

OGPRC:

The OGPRC implements several **national projects - Field social work and field work in municipalities with the presence of MRC II** (2 phases, 06/2017 – 12/2019; 11/2019 – 08/2023), **Community services in towns and municipalities with the presence of MRC - Phase II** (2 phases; 01/2016 – 12/2019, 11/2019 – 08/2023). Funding is provided through the Operational Programme Human Resources under Priority Axis 5, which focuses on the integration of MRC. The beneficiary of the national projects is the Government Office of the Slovak Republic and the implementer of the national projects is the OGPRC. The outputs of the national projects Field Social Work and Community Services serve as the basis for the National Project Field Social Work and Community Centres, which will be implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the new programming period 2021-2027. The aim of these national projects is professional work on an individual level, as well as work with families, with a focus on MRC. The interventions implemented are aimed at empowering individuals, strengthening their competences and skills, sensitising public opinion and improving the quality of life of individuals and families.

In both national projects, activities are implemented through career counselling interventions, individual employment services (such as interview preparation, how to properly write a CV or job applications), and financial literacy counselling and debt/personal bankruptcy services. Through the interventions of the national project Field social work and field work in municipalities with the presence of MRC II, almost 6 thousand clients have been employed. Similarly, in the area of finance, 1857 clients were assisted with debt relief and 770 clients were assisted with personal bankruptcy. The national project Community services in towns and municipalities with the presence of MRC – Phase II expanded the dispersion of education through completing the retraining courses, contributing to improved access to the labour market for segregated communities; around 5,000 people from MRC settlements have been employed. One of the activities of the national project was the provision of career and financial counselling, which correctly guided the clients in the management of financial resources and significantly increased their employment opportunities on the labour market. 7125 activities were carried out in the field of debt relief/personal bankruptcy. The number of people participating in financial literacy activities related to debt relief was 35,495, which also contributed to increased employment on the labour market and consequent improvement of housing conditions.

In the period 1/2017 and 10/2023, the OGPRC implemented the project **Support for pre-primary education of children from MRC II (PRIM II)**. Temporary compensatory measures were applied within the framework of the project implementation within the meaning of Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and on the amendment to

certain acts (Anti-Discrimination Act) as amended. The OGPRC introduced the obligation of preferential employment of Roma applicants in the selection of applicants for jobs financed from the NP PRIM funds. Temporarily, the compensatory measure was applied in the selection of a teaching assistant in a kindergarten and a professional employee in a kindergarten. The temporary compensation measure was applied in 27% of cases in 2019, 26.5% in 2020, 50.55% in 2021 and 49.06% in 2022. See more on the OGPRC website: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/narodne-projekty/np-prim-ii-projekt-inkluzie-v-materskych-skolach/> and in the document: https://www.snslp.sk/wp-content/uploads/DVO_USVRK-2.pdf

On 6 April 2022, the Government of the SR adopted Resolution No. 256/2022 with **Action Plans for the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030 for the years 2022-2024**. The Action Plans define specific measures and activities for the sub-objectives at the level of the individual priority areas of the Strategy (education, employment, housing, health and combating anti-Roma racism and promoting participation). The global objective in the priority area **Employment** is to improve the employability and increase the employment of Roma, specifically of MRC, by 2030, by creating opportunities leading to their participation on the labour market. The Action Plan in the priority area Employment is linked to the global objective by four sub-objectives, within which specific measures and activities are defined. Sub-objectives include:

- ensure equal opportunities for MRC, increase the necessary skills and gain practical experience to make the transition from education to the labour market
- increase the efficiency, quality of provision and widen accessibility of public and non-public employment services and active labour market measures for MRC
- create conditions to support the employment of MRC by employers, with an emphasis on employers in the social economy
- reduce discrimination in the labour market and other manifestations of anti-Roma racism.

Within the **Education priority area**, the following activities under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport are support measures aimed at promoting employment:

- 1.4.1 Improve the delivery of second-chance education to increase the number of institutions offering education and the proportion of second-chance education graduates, taking into account the needs of women with parental responsibilities
- 1.4.4 Implement career guidance and education programmes in kindergartens, primary and secondary school taking into account the specific needs of pupils from MRC and the needs of women with parental responsibilities

The Action Plans are published on the website of the OGPRC in the Slovak language: <https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategia-pre-rovnost-inkluziu-a-participaciu-romov-doroku-2030/>;

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1113/akcne_plany_strategie_2030_na_roky_2022_2024_final.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556 and in the English language:

<https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/strategie/strategy-of-equality-inclusion-and-participation-of-roma-until-2030/>;

https://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/site/assets/files/1526/action_plans_2022_2024_of_the_strategy_of_equality_inclusion_and_participation_of_roma_until_2030-1.pdf?csrt=2427392914380078556

In 2023, the **Monitoring Report for 2022** was published **together with an appendix**, further information is provided in the answer to question 2 e).

5. What specific measures are taken to reduce the vulnerability to THB of persons with disabilities? Please provide information in the following areas:

Ministry of Interior:

Article 3(2) of the Act on Victims of Crime states that “the rights granted to the victim by this Act are applied without discrimination based on sex, religion or belief, race, nationality or ethnic group, health condition, age, sexual orientation, marital status, skin colour, language, political or other mentality, national or social origin, property or other position”.

According to Article 3(3) of the Order on the Assistance Programme, “the programme entity shall take into account with special regard a person with special needs whose needs are related, in particular, to the fact that she is pregnant, to his or her state of health, to a disability, to a mental or psychological disorder or to a serious form of psychological, physical or sexual violence suffered”, the programme entity being, according to Article 2 (d) of the quoted Order: the National Coordinator/State Secretary of the Ministry, who is also the National Coordinator for combating THB, the IC MI SR, the NUFIM BBFP P PF, a police officer of the Border and Foreign Police Service of the BBFP P PF, the MO MI SR, a law enforcement authority/investigator of the Police Force, a Police Force investigator assigned to the Office of the Inspection Service and a commissioned officer of the Police Force, and other departments, facilities and organisations under the competence of the Ministry of Interior. At the same time, it can be stated that **assistance and support is provided to any THB victim who voluntarily decides to join the Assistance Programme.**

In this context, it is possible to mention the implementation of staff training in all higher territorial units (administration of social service facilities), during the summer months of 2023, as well as online training, which will be implemented in October and November 2023 for employees of social service facilities.

- a. deinstitutionalisation, including community and family-based services for children and support for independent living;

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

The **national project Deinstitutionalisation of Social Services Facilities - Support for Transformation Teams** supports the creation of community-based services. The emergence and existence of community-based services reduces the vulnerability of persons with disabilities to THB by making residential social services more accessible and embedded in the community with the support of the community life of the recipients. There is also an emphasis on field and outpatient social services, where recipients are worked with in their home environment, making them less vulnerable to THB.

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- b. monitoring institutions and foster families accommodating persons with disabilities;

Ministry of Health:

The lodging of complaints about the provision of healthcare is carried out in accordance with the provision of Article 17 of Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on healthcare, services related to healthcare provision and on the amendment to certain acts as amended.

- c. procedure for the selection and appointment of legal guardians and monitoring of their work;

Ministry of Health:

Pursuant to Article 11(15) of Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on healthcare, services related to healthcare provision and on the amendment to certain acts as amended, a person who holds a card of a natural person with severe disabilities with an accompanying person and who is also a person who is incapable of giving informed consent has, during the provision of healthcare in an inpatient healthcare institution, **the right to the presence of a person referred to in Article 6(1)(b) or another person of full age designated in writing by the person referred to in Article 6(1)(b), provided that the presence of such a person will not or does not interfere with the provision of healthcare.** Pursuant to Article 6(1)(b) of Act No. 576/2004 Coll., this person may be a **guardian or another person of legal age designated in writing by the guardian.**

Pursuant to Article 6(1) of Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on healthcare, services related to healthcare provision and on the amendment to certain acts as amended, the attending healthcare professional is obliged to inform about the purpose, nature, consequences and risks of providing healthcare, about the choices of the proposed procedures and the risks of refusing healthcare provision, unless otherwise provided for in this Act (Article 6a, Article 44(6), Article 44b(2)),

(a) the person to whom the healthcare is to be provided or another person designated by that person, (b) a legal representative, guardian, a natural person other than a parent who has the minor child in his/her personal care, a person who has the child in surrogate personal care, a person who has the child in foster care, a person who is interested in becoming a foster parent and has the child temporarily entrusted to his/her care, a prospective adoptive parent, a person who has the child entrusted to him/her pursuant to special regulations, a statutory representative of the institution in which a court decision is implemented on the order of institutional care, on imposing an urgent measure, on placing a person in a juvenile detention centre, on imposing an educational measure or on imposing protective education, or a person authorised by the statutory representative of that institution (legal representative), if the person to whom the healthcare is to be provided is a minor child, a person deprived of legal capacity or a person with limited legal capacity, and, where appropriate, a person who is incapable of giving his or her informed consent.

- d. access to adequate accommodation, education and work;

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

Amendment to Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on upbringing and education (School Act) and on the amendment to certain acts introduced the definition of the concept of special educational needs of children and pupils and the development of a model of eligible support measures in upbringing and education, including the system of their financing. Change of concept/definition - to be replaced by a new definition of a child or pupil experiencing barriers to access to upbringing and education and in learning who needs the provision and application of support measures to fulfil his/her educational potential. The proposal links the provision of support measures with the diagnosis carried out in the transformed counselling and prevention system at each of the five levels of provision of professional activities. The system of support measures, together with the catalogue of support measures, which is a systemic expression of needs, is the means of implementing inclusive education. Until now, special educational needs have only been granted to a group of children and pupils with disabilities, socially disadvantaged backgrounds or talent. The aim of the amendment was to extend these needs to other groups of difficulties and specificities in a child's development, for example in the areas of language and cognitive abilities, motivation and emotionality or skills. The new system is also better able to take account of children's and pupils' difficulties in upbringing and education, and is also better able to respond to the needs of gifted children and pupils in developing their personal potential, by specially developing their creativity or other skills.

Ministry of Interior:

In this context, it is possible to mention the Assistance Programme, which is coordinated by the IC MI SR and within the framework of which accommodation is provided to victims of THB by the contracted entities SCC and GCC, and this service can help the victim of THB to get out of the criminal environment. Assistance is also provided to victims of THB in finding work, reintegration of Slovak nationals and integration of foreigners, for the purpose of reintegration into society. Further information on the Assistance Programme is provided in the answer to question 3.

- e. access to information and reporting/complaints mechanisms which are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Ministry of Interior:

Article 4 of the Act on Victims of Crime contains provisions dealing with the right to information. Act No. 9/2010 Coll. on complaints regulates the procedure for filing, handling and controlling the handling of complaints from natural persons or legal entities.

Ministry of Health:

The lodging of complaints about the provision of healthcare is carried out in accordance with the provision of Article 17 of Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on healthcare, services related to healthcare provision and on the amendment to certain acts as amended.

6. How do you ensure in practice that an assessment of the vulnerability and special needs of asylum seekers is carried out at an early stage? What procedures are followed when vulnerability to THB is detected? Please provide information on policies and measures in the following areas:
 - a. provision of comprehensive and accessible information, in a range of relevant languages, on the rights of asylum seekers, indicators of THB, rights of victims of THB, and contacts of relevant organisations;

Ministry of Interior:

Article 4 of the Act on Victims of Crime contains provisions dealing with the right to information. In this context, it is also possible to mention the Assistance Programme, which is coordinated by the IC MI SR and within the framework of which services are provided to victims of THB by contracted entities, which are SCC and GCC. In the case of voluntary consent to the THB victim's entry into the Assistance Programme, the care provider shall, immediately after the THB victim's inclusion in the Assistance Programme, draw up a draft individual assistance plan in cooperation with the THB victim and deliver it to the IC MI SR no later than within 7 working days of the date of the THB victim's inclusion in the Assistance Programme. Further information on the Assistance Programme is provided in the answer to question 3.

Within the asylum procedure, increased attention is paid to the initial identification of potential victims of THB among asylum seekers. The staff of the MO MI SR proceed in the field of THB in accordance with internal documents specifying the procedures for the identification of victims of THB. The MO MI SR has developed a set of questions to identify an asylum seeker as a potential victim of THB. These questions are directly defined in Instruction of the Director of the MO MI SR No. 13/2012, which contained methodological guidance to ensure the identification of potential victims of THB

within the competence of the MO MI SR. The range of questions to be asked in the identification is also defined in Annex 1 of the Order on the Assistance Programme. In order to identify victims of THB, the interviewers conducting asylum interviews continuously use a set of questions aimed at identification, in accordance with the above-mentioned Instruction. In the same way, in the facilities of the MO MI SR, social workers work with asylum seekers from the moment of their arrival, and in their work with asylum seekers they also address, among other things, the threat of THB or the identification of potential victims. At the same time, the instruction of asylum seekers has been supplemented with information on THB, including questions serving to self-identify a person as a victim or potential victim of THB. This information is given to each asylum seeker in a language he/she understands or is translated into such a language.

Government Resolution of the SR No. 665/ 2022 of 26 October 2022 adopted the Contingency plan of the Slovak Republic for dealing with the emergency situation in connection with the mass influx of the population of Ukraine to the territory of the Slovak Republic caused by the escalation of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine for the period October 2022 - March 2023 (hereinafter referred to as the “Contingency Plan”). The Ministry of Interior has also included the issue of THB in the above mentioned Contingency Plan. One of the strategic objectives of the Contingency Plan is also to give increased attention and protection to persons with specific needs, in particular UMs, persons with disabilities and women who are victims of THB and/or sexual and gender-based violence. By Government Resolution of the SR No. 346/2023 of 23 June 2023, the Contingency Plan was updated and the current document is valid until the end of December 2023.

After the outbreak of the war conflict in Ukraine, which was connected with the appearance of a new population group on the territory of the Slovak Republic, the activities of the Information Offices were also specialised for victims from among citizens of other countries, especially those who had left Ukraine. In order to respond adequately to the needs of victims from this population group, the staff capacities of the Information Offices were also strengthened by informal interpreters from among university students for the purpose of interpreting the content of communication between the worker and the client. At the same time, the service of Information Offices was also made available in the premises of the operated large-capacity centres in Michalovce and Bratislava, in order to effectively identify victims of crime from among the incoming residents of other countries and to provide them with victim support services.

In response to the outbreak of the war conflict in Ukraine, the Ministry of Interior prepared a preventive information leaflet on THB in A4 size in 2 language versions (Slovak-Ukrainian leaflet). Due to the high number of arriving foreign students studying in Ukraine, the information leaflet was adapted into an information brochure and expanded to include additional languages (Slovak, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Roma, Russian and English). The aim of all information materials was and still is to protect war refugees from Ukraine from the threat of THB crime. All information materials were distributed, in addition to the online space, to all Slovak-Ukrainian border crossings, train and railway stations, hotspots, large-capacity centres, Slovnaft a.s. petrol stations, all Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, community centres, district offices and client centres, etc. The cooperating entities in this activity (both in translation and distribution) were Information Offices, IC MI SR, NUFIM BBFP P PF, press department of the Ministry of Interior, MO MI SR, Crisis Management Section of the Ministry of Interior, General Government Section of the Ministry of Interior (all district offices), OGPRC, Office of the Government Plenipotentiary of the SR for National Minorities, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family - all Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Ministry of Culture of the SR (hereinafter referred to as the “Ministry of Culture”), Ministry of Finance of the SR, Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia, local government, towns and municipalities, #ktopomôžeu krajine Initiative, IOM, SCC, GCC, Spiš Charity, Academy of the Police Force, Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (community centres + Department of Gender Equality), Russian Grammar School in Bratislava, the company Slovnaft a. s. (16 motorway petrol stations + 4 in Sobrance, Michalovce, Humenné, Vranov nad Topľou), Slovak

Red Cross, Knights of Malta, American Embassy, Slovak and Ukrainian editors and others. The total number of distributed brochures in printed form so far is 85 thousand. <https://rb.gy/beyk9h>

This information brochure was also presented through national rapporteurs and similar mechanisms at a meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, as well as at a meeting of the Informal Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms against trafficking in human beings (NREM), as one of the examples of good preventive activities in the field of combating THB on the Slovak-Ukrainian border.

SCC:

In accordance with the service contract concluded between the SCC as a service provider and the Ministry of Interior, the SCC carries out identification of victims as an ancillary and supplementary service, especially among foreigners in reception, residence and detention camps. This includes interviews and consultations with potential victims and the availability of assistance and cooperation through inclusion in the Assistance Programme. The GCC, a partner of the SCC, carries out meetings with asylum seekers in the reception camp in Humenné on a regular basis (3 to 4 meetings per year). The meetings are conducted in English.

- b. access to legal assistance and representation;

Ministry of Interior:

With regard to the provision of legal assistance and representation of victims of THB, it can be stated that **within the framework of the Assistance Programme, which is coordinated by the IC MI SR, it is possible to provide each victim of THB with legal counselling services, which are mediated by the contracted entity SCC and GCC.** In accordance with the service contract, the contracted entity must have an expert guarantor for legal counselling, which was one of the conditions of the public procurement procedure. Further information on the Assistance Programme is provided in the answer to question 3.

Victims may also contact accredited entities providing assistance to victims of crime under the Act on Victims of Crime (listed by the Ministry of Justice), which are notified in a briefing to any victim who comes into contact with law enforcement authorities or a healthcare provider. To the victims, as particularly vulnerable victims, specialised professional assistance may be provided, including, for example, the provision and explanation of all information under the Act on Victims of Crime, legal assistance, psychological assistance, psychological crisis intervention, assessment of the threat of danger to life or health, mediation of social services in an emergency housing facility and specialised social counselling. This assistance scheme is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice of the SR.

Since 1 February 2023, an amendment to Act No. 583/2008 Coll. on the prevention of crime and other antisocial activities and on the amendment to certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the “Crime Prevention Act”) has been in force, which has created a legislative prerequisite for the inclusion of **Information Offices** in the organisational structure of the Ministry of Interior. The intention was to create a minimum network of victim support services, which would be provided and delivered by the State and at the same time to complement the existing system of victim assistance in the SR by taking into account the victims of antisocial activities. The legislative enshrining of the Information Offices under the Ministry of Interior also fulfilled the provision of Article 8(4) of Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA (OJ L 315/57, 14. 11. 2012), according to which: “Victim support services and any specialist support services may be set up as public or non-governmental organisations and may be

organised on a professional or voluntary basis”. As part of their activities, the Information Offices provide information for victims of THB regarding legal assistance and representation.

As regards legal assistance and representation of applicants in asylum proceedings, on the basis of the information provided by the MO MI SR, this is provided free of charge through a project carried out by the non-governmental organisation Slovak Humanitarian Council, or in appeal proceedings, free legal representation is also provided by the state organisation Legal Aid Centre.

- c. access to decent accommodation, health (including psychological) care, work and education.

Ministry of Interior:

During the asylum procedure under Act No.480/2002 Coll. on asylum and on the amendment to certain acts, the victim of THB who is a third-country national is provided with the services of the integration programme through the MO MI SR. After the end of the asylum procedure, the services of the Assistance Programme are provided to the THB victim through the service provider with whom the Ministry of Interior has concluded a valid contract for the provision of services (currently the SCC and GCC).

Within the framework of the Assistance Programme coordinated by the IC MI SR, victims of THB can be provided with suitable and safe accommodation by the contracted entities SCC and GCC, while the service can help the THB victim to break free and isolate themselves from the criminal environment. It is also possible to provide psychological counselling or psychotherapeutic services to victims of THB, as well as assistance in finding a job, for the purpose of inclusion and possible reintegration into society. Further information on the Assistance Programme is provided in the answer to question 3.

The Act on Victims of Crime also specifies the assistance and rights of victims of crime.

The Ministry of Interior of the SR cooperated with the Ministry of Health of the SR in the preparation of an amendment to Act No. 580/2004 Coll. on health insurance and on the amendment to Act No. 95/2002 Coll. on insurance system and on the amendment to certain acts as amended, and which amends certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the Act on Health Insurance”), in the part concerning the delegation of competence in the matter of reimbursement of healthcare for a foreigner granted subsidiary protection and the addition of a foreigner with a tolerated stay who has been included in the Assistance Programme. The amendment to the Act on Health Insurance took effect on 1 January 2021. **This amendment resolved the eligibility of foreign nationals granted tolerated stay as victims enrolled in the Assistance Programme for healthcare reimbursement until they are removed from the Assistance Programme.**

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

The Act on Employment Services regulates the conditions of employment of citizens of EU Member States and third-country nationals on the territory of the Slovak Republic. Pursuant to Article 23a(1)(h) and (2) of the Act on Employment Services, a third-country national who is an asylum seeker and whose entry to the labour market is permitted by a special regulation is not required to have a certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy corresponding to a highly qualified job, a certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy, or an employment permit at the conclusion of an employment contract.

Ministry of Health:

This area, in relation to healthcare, is addressed in Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on healthcare, services related to healthcare provision and on the amendment to certain acts as amended.

7. What specific measures are taken to reduce the vulnerability to THB of migrant workers (including seasonal workers, seconded/posted workers, domestic workers, diplomatic household employees)? Please provide information on policies and measures in the following areas:

- a. provision of comprehensive and accessible information, in a range of relevant languages, on migration and labour laws, worker protection and contacts of relevant organisations;

Ministry of Interior:

The right to information for victims of THB derives from Article 4 of the Act on Victims of Crime, whereby the victim has the right to access information relating to the case in which he or she is a victim, to the extent provided for by law. The information shall be provided to the victim in a manner understandable to the victim in oral and written form.

The Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs has innovated the procedure of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in dealing with support staff in the homes of foreign diplomats sent on mission to representative offices in the SR. The non-governmental organisation providing the services of the Assistance Programme will also meet with the support staff during the formalities process to conduct an informative interview with the person aimed at identifying THB and providing them with contacts should they become a victim of THB. The procedure of embassies in case of suspicion of THB is included in the training activities of consuls and diplomatic staff preparing for posting abroad as a separate issue covered by the Ministry of Interior in the framework of pre-departure training. In order to improve efforts to actively identify victims of THB on the territory of the SR and abroad through the representative offices of the SR, especially among vulnerable groups, up-to-date methodological materials are provided to the representative offices of the SR. Some selected representative offices of the SR also have police attachés, with whom consular staff cooperate intensively. From the point of view of the Ministry of Interior, education of the professional public on the issue of combating THB is of high importance.

The IC MI SR has prepared an analysis on labour exploitation, which is very beneficial for the field. The intention of the analysis in question was to contribute to the improvement of the process of detection and investigation of THB crimes and to provide insight into the issue of THB for the purpose of labour exploitation and violation of provisions of the Labour Code. The analysis is published on the website of the Ministry of Interior: <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality>. The Ministry of Interior provided and distributed self-identification leaflets in 8 languages and information posters with the number of the national hotline during the period under review. The above materials were gradually distributed to non-governmental organisations, the BBFP P PF, the MO MI SR and for prevention purposes to schools and various educational events organised by the coordinators of prevention for child protection from violence, as well as for the needs of other educational activities in this area. In response to the outbreak of the war conflict in Ukraine, the Ministry of Interior prepared a preventive information leaflet on THB in A4 size in 2 language versions (Slovak-Ukrainian leaflet). Due to the high number of arriving foreign students studying in Ukraine, the information leaflet was adapted into an information brochure and expanded to include additional languages (Slovak, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Roma, Russian and English). The aim of all information materials was and still is to protect war refugees from Ukraine from the threat of THB crime. All information materials were distributed, in addition to the online space, to all Slovak-Ukrainian border crossings, train and railway stations, hotspots, large-capacity centres, Slovnaft a.s. petrol stations, all Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, community centres, district offices and client centres, etc.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

The free movement of workers is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union. It is enshrined in Article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. **EU citizens** have the right: to seek employment in another EU country, to work in that country without a work permit, to reside there for that purpose, to remain there after leaving employment, **to be treated equally with nationals of that country in terms of access to employment, working conditions** and all other social and tax benefits. The free movement of workers also applies to the countries of the European Economic Area: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Restrictions on this right may be justified on grounds of public policy, public security and the protection of public health. Pursuant to Article 5(1) of the Labour Code, labour-law relations between foreigners (citizens living outside the territory of the EU/EEA) working on the territory of the SR and an employer established on the territory of the SR are governed by the Labour Code, unless otherwise provided for by private international law. According to Article 36 of the Constitution of the SR (Act No. 460/1992 Coll., as amended by later constitutional acts), employees have the right to work and to fair and satisfactory working conditions. According to Article 52(2) of the Constitution of the SR, foreigners enjoy in the SR the fundamental human rights and freedoms guaranteed by this Constitution, unless they are expressly granted only to citizens. If foreigners are employed on the territory of the SR according to the law of the SR, they have the same working conditions (rights and obligations), the right to equal treatment as other employees (Slovak citizens). The employer's obligations when employing a citizen of an EU Member State and a third-country national are regulated by the provisions of Article 23b of the Act on Employment Services.

Under Article 4 of the basic principles of the Labour Code, employees or employee representatives have the right to be provided with information on the economic and financial situation of the employer and on the expected development of its activities **in a comprehensible manner** and at an appropriate time. Employees may express their views and make proposals on the employer's forthcoming decisions which may affect their position in the labour-law relations. It is in the employer's interest to provide information to employees in a comprehensible manner in order to enable employees to comply with the employer's instructions. We are of the opinion that the specific methods of communication, especially when problems arise between the employer and the employees or the employer and the employee representatives, should be regulated in the collective agreement. According to Article 13(3) of the Labour Code, the exercise of rights and obligations arising from labour-law relations must be in accordance with good morals. No one may abuse these rights and obligations to the detriment of the other party to the labour-law relation or fellow employees. These are rules of a moral nature which are generally valid in a democratic society in which **mutual courtesy, consideration and mutual respect** are applied and enforced. **Pursuant to Article 8(2) of Act No. 270/1995 Coll. on the state language, as amended**, written legal acts in a labour-law relation or similar employment relationship shall be drawn up in the state language; in addition to the state language version, an identical text in another language may also be drawn up. Such a legal act is, for example, an employment contract concluded between the parties to a labour-law relation. The Labour Code does not expressly contain provisions which prohibit or exclude the possibility of such a contract being drawn up in, for example, a minority language, if the parties to the labour-law relation so agree. The same applies to other legal acts such as an agreement to change the employment contract, an agreement to terminate employment, a notice of dismissal, an agreement on material liability, etc. Article 1 of the Labour Code of the basic principles explicitly provides that natural persons have the right to free choice of employment, to fair, satisfactory, transparent and predictable working conditions and to protection against arbitrary dismissal from employment in accordance with the principle of equal treatment established for the field of labour-law relations by special Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and on the amendment to certain acts (Anti-Discrimination Act). They are entitled to these rights without any restriction or discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital

or family status, sexual orientation, race, colour, **language**, age, adverse health conditions or disabilities, genetic features, religion, political or other opinion, trade union activity, national or social origin, membership of a nationality or ethnic group, property, gender or other status, except where the difference in treatment is justified by the nature of the activities carried out in the employment or the circumstances in which those activities are carried out, where that ground constitutes a genuine and overriding requirement for employment, provided that the aim is legitimate and the requirement proportionate. The above principle is applied in all provisions of the Labour Code.

In the case of seasonal employment or intra-corporate transfers, the condition for the issue of a vacancy certificate containing an agreement to fill the vacancy is that the employment contract or the employer's promise complies with the Act on Employment Services (Article 21b(4)(b)).

On the basis of the information provided by the CLSAF, it can be noted that the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family participate in close cooperation with the BBFP P PF, which directly manages, methodologically guides and controls the activities of its organisational units in the performance of tasks in the field of the residence regime of foreigners, in the issuance of permits for temporary residence for the purpose of employment - a positive opinion of the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is required for the filling of a vacancy by a foreigner, which is preceded by a "labour market test". The Act on Employment Services excludes the collection of fees from the citizen when arranging employment for remuneration or when placing an employee in the temporary employment agency mode of operation.

In accordance with Directive 2014/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers, seasonal workers from third countries receive, together with their seasonal employment permit, information on the rights and obligations of third-country nationals arising from seasonal employment, information on the minimum wage and contact details for the Labour Inspectorate in cases of violations of working conditions or occupational health and safety conditions. The information is provided in English.

The National Labour Inspectorate (established and coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, hereinafter referred to as the NLI"), in connection with the military conflict on the territory of Ukraine and the influx of refugees to the territory of the SR, has provided information on working conditions in Slovakia on its website <https://www.ip.gov.sk/mimoriadna-situacia-na-ukrajine/?ip=nip> in the Ukrainian language.

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs:

Representative offices of the SR abroad provide comprehensive information in the relevant languages in a passive form (public boards, websites) and in an active form (when providing information, accepting applications, making interviews, etc.).

- b. provision of clear employment contracts;

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family: mentioned under the answer to question 7(a).

The NLI stated that despite the fact that labour legislation does not oblige employers to issue documents in labour-law relations (employment contracts and others) in a language other than the state language, it is clear from the application practice and the experience of labour inspectors that some employers issue bilingual contracts. They do so in the interests of clarity of the individual agreement on the terms and conditions of employment.

At the same time, the European Employment Services/EURES may also be mentioned in this context. The European Employment Services network is coordinated by the European Labour Authority ELA. The main task of the EURES (EUROpean Employment Services) network is to facilitate the free

movement of workers within the European Economic Area (EU countries, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) and Switzerland and to promote fair labour mobility. The EURES network is made up of advisers trained by the European Commission who provide comprehensive assistance, information, advice and mediation services to job seekers in Europe. For European employers interested in recruiting workers from EU/EEA countries and Switzerland, the EURES network offers professional advice and recruitment assistance. The EURES network has been active in Slovakia since 1 May 2004, when the Slovak Republic became a member of the EU. EURES services are available in Slovakia at all 46 Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, where EURES advisers and contact persons are based. EURES has an indispensable role in cross-border regions, where, in addition to its standard services, it provides in particular advice on the rights and obligations of cross-border workers who work in one Member State but live in a neighbouring country to which they return on a daily or at least weekly basis.

Ministry of Interior:

Within the framework of educational activities and awareness-raising on THB issues, the departments of the Ministry of Interior are dedicated to the identification of potential risks, especially in connection with travelling abroad for work or temporary work. As part of the lectures, a number of promotional materials containing information on assistance options and preventive advice were distributed. As part of the lecture activity, participants are alerted and good pre-departure advice is shared with them, including in relation to employment contracts. An important tool for the area is the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818 operated by the SCC which serves to provide professional help to victims of THB as quickly as possible, to report suspected THB, but also as a form of prevention, where people can ask for advice and information e.g. before travelling abroad. Materials in the field of prevention and combating THB can be found on the website of the Ministry of Interior <https://www.minv.sk/?obchodovanie-s-ludmi-a-slovenska-republika>.

- c. access to decent work and housing, health care, social services and education;

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

Pursuant to Article 23b(5) of the Act on Employment Services, a domestic legal entity or a domestic natural person that has concluded a contract with a foreign legal entity or a foreign natural person on the basis of which employees of a foreign employer are sent to it to perform work on the territory of the SR (hereinafter referred to as the “informing organisation”) is responsible for the working conditions and conditions of employment in accordance with special regulations (the Labour Code).

In the case of a third-country national posted by an employer established in an EU Member State in the framework of the provision of services provided by that employer, the informing organisation shall also attach to the information card form by means of which it notifies the competent Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the beginning and end of the posting a copy of the proof of accommodation which meets the minimum requirements under a special regulation, at least for the expected period of the posting (Article 23b(6) of the Act on Employment Services).

A document confirming the provision of accommodation which meets the minimum requirements under the special regulation for at least the expected duration of the employment, if the third-country national is not subject to a visa requirement under the special regulation, shall also be a mandatory annex to the application for a work permit for seasonal employment (Article 22(5)(a) of the Act on Employment Services).

Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on social services and on the amendment to Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on trade licensing, as amended, in Article 3(1), defines the parties to legal relations, and in paragraph 2, it

defines which natural persons may be recipients of social services. These provisions include, inter alia, natural persons from third countries who may be recipients of social services if they meet the conditions laid down by law. From the point of view of the above-mentioned Act on Social Services, the above-mentioned provisions also include the obligation to provide social services to these natural persons.

Within the framework of social services, assistance to victims of THB is provided in the Emergency Housing Facility (Article 29), in which the following is provided to a natural person in an unfavourable social situation pursuant to Article 2(2)(g) - by reason of being threatened by the behaviour of other natural persons or, if he or she has been the victim of the behaviour of other natural persons: accommodation for a certain period of time, social counselling, assistance in exercising rights and legally protected interests, conditions for the preparation of meals, the dispensing of meals or the dispensing of food, the performance of necessary basic personal hygiene, cleaning, laundry, ironing and maintenance of linen and clothing, and leisure activities.

Labour inspectorates, through their inspection activities at workplaces, influence employers to comply with the minimum statutory working and wage conditions. In the course of labour inspections, working conditions are checked in terms of compliance with the employer's obligations in the field of occupational health and safety, in terms of performance of legal work, and also the employer's obligations arising from labour and wage law. The target group of persons performing work at the employer's workplace are foreigners as well as Slovak nationals. The requirements for equal treatment in the workplace irrespective of nationality are also examined in order to prevent wage and social dumping.

Ministry of Health:

The right to healthcare is addressed by the provision of Article 11(2) of Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on healthcare, services related to healthcare provision and on the amendment to certain acts as amended, the area is also dealt with in Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on asylum, as amended, and the Act on Health Insurance. The right to the provision of healthcare and services related to the provision of healthcare, including cross-border healthcare, shall be guaranteed equally to everyone, in accordance with the principle of equal treatment in healthcare and in the provision of goods and services laid down in a special regulation. In accordance with the principle of equal treatment, discrimination on grounds of sex, religion or belief, race, nationality, membership of a national or ethnic group, sexual orientation, marital or family status, colour, language, political or other opinion, trade union activity, national or social origin, disability, age, property, gender or other status is also prohibited.

- d. possibility to change employers;

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

The Act on Employment Services contains provisions regulating the procedure of the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in issuing a confirmation of the possibility of filling a vacancy for the purpose of changing the data in the Special Records document due to a change of employer. [Article 21b(1), (3)(b) of the Act on Employment Services].

During the validity of the temporary stay for the purpose of employment, the third-country national has the possibility to change the employer or employment. This change is preceded by a review of the labour market situation (the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family reviews and gives an opinion) and the employee's reporting obligation to the Foreign Police Department of the BBFP P PF, which issues a new document "Additional data on employment".

Thus, the labour law does not prevent a foreigner from making a change of employer. It is necessary that, in connection with the change of employment, the conditions under which the foreigner may be

employed are fulfilled by the foreigner and his/her employer. Labour inspectors check the legality of the employment of the foreigner and the employer's compliance with the prohibition of illegal employment. It is necessary that the foreigner has been issued a residence permit for the territory of the SR for the purpose of employment or for another purpose that entitles the foreigner to perform dependent work.

- e. access to confidential complaints mechanisms;

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

Pursuant to Act No. 125/2006 Coll. on labour inspection and on the amendment to Act No. 82/2005 Coll. on illegal work and illegal employment and on the amendment to certain acts, the labour inspectorate is obliged to carry out a labour inspection within 30 days of receipt of a complaint, and the person who submitted the complaint must be immediately informed of the result of the labour inspection. The complaint may be lodged by employees who are aggrieved by a violation of obligations arising from labour-law relations and by representatives of employees who are employed by the employer whose violation of labour law was revealed by the inspection activities.

In relation to situations concerning the posting of employees, the Labour Code directly provides that if a visiting employee believes that his/her rights or legally protected interests have been affected by non-compliance with the conditions of posting to the territory of the Slovak Republic, he/she may lodge a complaint directly or through the employee representatives with the competent labour inspection body or may apply to the court and seek legal protection.

Filing a complaint is therefore one of the rights of the employee under the labour law. One of the basic principles of the Code is that employees and employers who are aggrieved by breaches of obligations arising from labour-law relations may enforce their rights in court. Employers must not disadvantage or prejudice employees because employees exercise their rights under labour-law relations.

With effect from 1 November 2023, the Labour Code has been amended to add provisions relating to the protection of employees from punishment by employers in cases where they seek to protect their labour rights. It is stipulated that the employee has the right to lodge a complaint with the employer in connection with the violation of the principle of equal treatment and the violation of rights and obligations arising from the labour-law relation. The employer is obliged to respond to the employee's complaint in writing without undue delay, to remedy, to refrain from such conduct and to eliminate its consequences.

An employee shall not be harassed or otherwise penalised in the labour-law relation for lodging a complaint against another employee or the employer, lodging a complaint with the competent labour inspection authority, a legal action, a request for criminal prosecution or other notification of criminality or other antisocial activity, failing to maintain confidentiality about his or her working conditions, including wage conditions, and conditions of employment, or for asserting rights and legally protected interests arising from the labour-law relation.

An employee who considers that his/her rights or legitimate interests have been violated shall have the right to apply to the courts for legal redress. If an employee in an employment dispute notifies the court of facts from which it may reasonably be inferred that the employer's termination of the employment relationship was due to the employee's assertion of his or her rights and legally protected interests arising from the labour-law relation, the employer must prove that the termination of the employment relationship was due to other reasons.

In the event that an employee approaches the labour inspectorate and seeks protection of his/her labour rights, labour inspectors and other employees of labour inspectorates and the National Labour Inspectorate shall be bound by confidentiality regarding labour inspection complaints, their content and the entities who made the complaint, and shall maintain confidentiality regarding other facts related to labour inspection which have come to their knowledge in the course of carrying out labour

inspections.

- f. right to join trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining;

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

The Labour Code in no way excludes employees who are foreign nationals from joining a trade union and engaging in collective bargaining. Non-unionised employees also have rights under collective agreements, as the rights of employees that are collectively bargained for are subsequently applied to all employees indiscriminately.

- g. legal avenues for regularising their stay in the country.

Ministry of Interior:

SEASONAL WORKERS: seasonal employment is based on Directive 2014/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers. For the purposes of the Act on Employment Services, seasonal employment is an activity which does not exceed 180 days in any period of 12 consecutive months and is tied to a period of the year by a recurring event or a recurring sequence of events associated with seasonal conditions during which a substantially higher volume of work is required. Third-country nationals may engage in seasonal employment under two regimes:

1. Seasonal employment for a period shorter than 90 days

A different procedure applies depending on whether or not a Schengen visa is required for the entry of the third-country national.

• **Third-country nationals for whom a visa is not required:**

If the third-country national is not subject to a visa requirement, he/she may carry out seasonal employment on the basis of an employment permit.

The employment permit is granted by the local competent Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. The employment permit may be granted by the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family for a maximum period of 90 days during 12 consecutive months and the employer is obliged **to report the vacancy at least 10 working days** before the application is submitted. It is also a condition for the granting of an employment permit that the employer complies with the legal conditions for the seasonal employment of foreigners. The Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family shall grant the seasonal employment permit **within 20 working days** of the date of submission of a complete application. If the third-country national has been granted a seasonal employment permit in the five years preceding the application, the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family shall grant the employment permit within 10 working days from the date of submission of a complete application.

• **Third-country nationals for whom a visa is required:**

Third-country nationals for whom a visa is required must first obtain an employment permit and then a Schengen visa for seasonal employment.

- **The employment permit** is obtained by the third-country national in the same way as for a person for whom a visa is not required (proof of health insurance and accommodation is not required at this stage).
- **The application for a Schengen visa for the purpose of seasonal employment** shall be submitted by the third-country national to the representative office (diplomatic mission or consular office) of the SR accredited for the state where the applicant resides or of which he/she is a citizen.

2. Seasonal employment for a period longer than 90 days

Seasonal employment for more than 90 days is only possible on the basis of a **temporary residence for the purpose of seasonal employment**. The total period of seasonal employment cannot exceed 180 days. A third-country national may either apply for a temporary residence permit for seasonal employment and start seasonal employment only after the residence permit has been granted, or he/she may carry out seasonal employment on the basis of an employment permit (and visa, in the case of a visa alien) for the first 90 days and on the basis of a temporary residence permit for employment for the second 90 days.

POSTED WORKERS: Intra-corporate transfer (ICT) is based on the transposition of Directive 2014/66/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals in the framework of an intra-corporate transfer. Intra-corporate transfer means the temporary secondment for occupational or training purposes of a foreign worker from a third country, who is outside the territory of the Slovak Republic and the EU Member States at the time of submitting an application for temporary residence, by an employer established outside the territory of the Slovak Republic and the EU Member States, to which the foreign worker from a third country is bound by a work contract prior to and during the transfer, to the same employer or to an employer within the same group of employers established in the Slovak Republic. Intra-corporate transfer can only be applied in the case of

- a foreign worker from a third country with a university degree who, as part of an intra-corporate transfer, is undergoing training (traineeship) for the purposes of professional development or to acquire knowledge in business management,
- a foreign worker from a third country who, in the context of an intra-corporate transfer, performs a senior management or professional function requiring specialised knowledge, skills, abilities, knowledge, qualifications and experience necessary for the operation or management.

In terms of authorisation processes, a distinction needs to be made between short-term transfers (up to 90 days) and long-term transfers. In the case of a short-term transfer of up to 90 days, the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family will grant an employment permit pursuant to Article 22(10) of the Act on Employment Services on the basis of an application for an employment permit by a foreign worker from a third country. In this case, temporary residence for employment purposes is not required and only a work permit is needed to carry out the work. In the case of a long-term transfer of more than 90 days, the foreign worker from a third country must apply for a temporary residence permit for the purpose of employment (intra-corporate transfer) exclusively at the representative office abroad.

Mobility of a foreign worker from a third country is a subset of intra-corporate transfer (ICT). Mobility means the transfer of a third-country foreign worker from the territory of another Member State to the territory of the SR during a valid stay on the territory of a Member State, whereby he/she will carry out the same purpose of stay on the territory of the SR as on the territory of the Member State, or the transfer of a third-country foreign worker from the territory of the SR to the territory of a Member State during a valid stay on the territory of the SR, whereby he/she will carry out the same purpose of stay on the territory of the Member State as on the territory of the SR.

Mobility allows students, researchers and family members of researchers who hold a residence permit in an EU Member State to take short-term stays in Slovakia without having to obtain a temporary residence permit. In addition to the obligation to notify the intention to accept students/researchers who are residents of other Member States for mobility in Slovakia, universities and research organisations also have a notification obligation in relation to posted students/researchers. If students/researchers from third countries who have been granted temporary residence in Slovakia intend to undertake mobility in another EU Member State, universities/research organisations are obliged to notify the local competent department of the Foreign Police of their intention to do so within three working days of becoming aware of this fact.

In the case of an identified victim of THB, the Assistance Programme includes, in accordance with Article 7(o) of the Order on the Assistance Programme, information on tolerated stay on the territory

of the SR and, if necessary, also information on the possibility to apply for international protection if the victim is a third-country national.

8. Do labour inspectorates and other authorities checking workplace conditions possess a comprehensive mandate, and adequate human, financial and technical resources, to conduct regular, proactive workplace inspections in all economic sectors, with a particular emphasis on high-risk sectors prone to exploitation? How do labour inspectors co-operate with other authorities and trade unions? Is there a separation between labour inspection and immigration control functions?

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

The competences of labour inspection in the SR are sufficiently broad in terms of the relevant legislation and are also in accordance with the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organisation. Labour inspection in the SR represents a comprehensive functional system of state bodies which, through its advisory, control and repressive action, ensures the enforcement of the constitutional rights of the parties to labour-law relations, in particular the protection of employees in the labour process.

The labour inspection system cooperates closely with other central government bodies, municipalities, workers' organisations, employers' organisations, public institutions and other natural persons and legal entities. At the request of the central government bodies in the field of labour inspection, the central government bodies, municipalities and public institutions provide the documents and information necessary for the performance of their activities. Mutual cooperation is primarily implemented by exchanging and providing relevant information and the labour inspection subsequently uses this information in its activities, which consist of control, repression, but also prevention in the form of free legal advice or awareness-raising activities directly in the performance of the inspection, but also in the form of various trainings and workshops.

The labour inspectorates also report detected cases of illegal employment and the imposition of fines for violation of the prohibition of illegal employment, including the facts identified in the labour inspection report, to the Social Insurance Agency, the CLSAF, the competent Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the competent tax authority and, if the person concerned is a national of a country that is not a Member State of the EU, another contracting state of the Agreement on the European Economic Area or the Swiss Confederation, or a stateless person, to the Police Force. It also notifies the competent Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the imposition of a fine for violation of working conditions for the purpose of cancelling a certificate of the possibility of filling a vacancy or for the purpose of withdrawing an employment permit for the purpose of seasonal employment. The labour inspectorate is also obliged to notify the law enforcement authorities of the facts found during the performance of a labour inspection which indicate that a criminal offence has been committed, including suspicion of a criminal offence of THB.

For the purpose of providing information to the state authorities and cooperation in the control of illegal work and illegal employment, Article 67 of the Act on Employment Services provides for the obligation of the labour inspectorate to provide the CLSAF and Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family with a notification of the detection of illegal work and the imposition of a fine for violation of the prohibition of illegal employment, which includes the business name of the employer, the registered office of the employer, the identification number of the organisation and the date of entry into force of the decision on the imposition of a fine for violation of the prohibition of illegal employment, as well as a list of all identified natural persons performing illegal work for the employer, which includes the name and surname of the natural person, the social security number of the natural person, the place of permanent residence or the place of temporary residence of the natural person and the date of the detection of illegal work.

Labour inspectorates have the mandate to carry out labour inspections, inter alia, as supervision of compliance with the regulations governing labour-law relations, in particular their establishment, modification and termination, wages and working conditions of employees, including working conditions of women, minors, domestic workers, persons with disabilities and persons under 15 years of age, and collective bargaining; legal regulations and other regulations to ensure occupational health and safety, including regulations governing factors in the working environment; legal regulations governing the prohibition of illegal work and illegal employment; obligations arising from collective agreements.

The staffing of labour inspectorates is slightly undersized in relation to recommendations of the International Labour Organisation. Other challenges for labour inspection bodies are the high average age of labour inspectors and the rules applied in the civil service in relation to the salary grading of newly recruited candidates. Despite this, labour inspectors are fully dedicated to carrying out controls across the entire material scope of labour inspection. Labour inspectors are adequately technically equipped to work in the field. They have laptops which are their workstations connected to the servers of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the e-services of the Social Insurance Agency are available online to verify the legality of employment online at the employer's workplace and at the time of the inspection.

Labour inspectorates also fulfil their legal obligation and assess the risk of illegal employment and regularly identify sectors of economic activity where illegal employment is concentrated, the so-called risk sectors. Subsequently, labour inspectorates carry out controls on illegal employment, particularly in the risk sectors.

Labour inspectors cooperate with employee representatives (trade unions, works councils, employee trustees or employee representatives for occupational health and safety/OHS) during labour inspections, obtain information from them, and allow them to be present during labour inspections.

Employee representatives have the opportunity to report their findings to the labour inspectorate after their own internal inspection. These are considered by law to be a complaint, which the labour inspectorates must investigate as a matter of priority within set time limits.

In inspections aimed at checking the legality of the work of foreigners, labour inspectors cooperate with members of the Foreign Police Departments of the Police Force. Other cooperation is carried out to obtain and verify data on foreigners, e.g. cooperation with Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, branches of the Social Insurance Agency and other organisations or cities and municipalities that can contribute to the investigation of cases.

Immigration control generally does not fall within the material competence of the labour inspection authorities. Labour inspectors verify during their inspections only whether the foreigner possesses a valid document of residence on the territory of the SR or another residence permit and a valid document authorising the foreigner to perform work on the territory of the SR.

Within the framework of cooperation between the institutions of the State, the NLI is a cooperating body and is represented in Slovak expert working groups such as:

- Expert Group on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings established by the Ministry of Interior
- National Expert Group on Combating Smuggling and THB established under the Inter-Ministerial Expert Coordination Body on Combating Crime.

The labour inspectorates cooperate with the Police Force authorities in the framework of Joint Actions Days of Europol – *European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats/EMPACT*, when they carry out synergy checks during two specific designated weeks.

Ministry of Interior:

The issue of illegal work and illegal employment is regulated by Act No. 82/2005 Coll. on illegal work and illegal employment, as amended, which defines the prohibition of illegal work and illegal employment in a very concise manner in the provision of Article 3. In the first paragraph it

states that a natural person may not perform illegal work. Article 2 states that a legal entity and a natural person who is an entrepreneur may not employ a natural person illegally. It is also defined in Article 3 that repeated violation of the prohibition of illegal employment shall be considered as a special serious violation of this Act for the purpose of revoking the trade license. Subsequently, Article 5(1) of the Act lists the central government bodies that carry out control of illegal work and illegal employment. These are the following authorities: labour inspectorates, the CLSAF and Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. These institutions are also responsible for the identification of illegally employed third-country nationals within the framework of general controls on illegal employment. For the Ministry of Interior, the identification of illegally employed migrants from third countries involves the Police Force, most often the BBFP P PF, with its subordinate organisational units at the central level (NUFIM BBFP P PF), regional level (directorates of the Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force) and local level (units of the Foreign Police of the Police Force).

When carrying out general control of illegal employment, labour inspectors focus on the sectors in which the highest number of illegally employed persons was detected in the previous period, as well as on the sectors which were assessed as risky on the basis of the assessment of the percentage of detected violations of the prohibition of illegal employment in the number of inspected natural persons in the respective sector. Supporting sources for the selection of the controlled entities are complaints from employees, former employees or third parties about breaches of the prohibition of illegal employment in specific workplaces, as well as notifications on the posting of employees in the cross-border provision of services carried out by visiting employers and data from the records of Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. The control body regularly identifies the sectors of economic activity (risk sectors) in which the illegal employment of migrants from third countries is concentrated. These are identified on the basis of the number of detections of illegal employment of migrants who had legal residence in the SR.

In addition to the above-mentioned institutions, Social Insurance Agency officers, tax and customs authority officers of the Financial Administration, as well as general government officers from the trade business departments of district offices and, to some extent, municipal authorities, whose officers are involved in joint actions to detect illegal employment, are also dealing with illegal employment.

The cooperation between the NUFIM BBFP P PF and labour inspectorates is mainly based on the Agreement on Cooperation in Carrying Out Controls of Business Entities Allowing Illegal Work, which was concluded between the Ministry of Interior and the NLI on 13 April 2012 and subsequently replaced by the Agreement on Carrying Out Cooperation Controls of Business Entities on 30 December 2013. Controls of business entities are carried out in order to ensure regulation and monitoring of business areas, identification of foreign nationals illegally residing in the SR and victims of the crime of THB. The typology of business entities to be controlled is provided by the NLI or BBFP P PF, depending on the received complaints, on the basis of obtained operational information pointing to suspicion of illegal employment of foreign nationals and THB. In particular, controls are aimed at detecting cases of illegal employment and illegal residence of third-country nationals and at identification of potential victims of THB.

9. How are employment and recruitment agencies regulated and monitored? Are all stages of the recruitment process, including advertisements, selection, transport, and placement, subject to regulation? Are recruitment fees and related costs prohibited from being borne by workers or jobseekers?

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

The conditions for the performance of employment intermediation for remuneration as well as the conditions for the performance of activities of temporary employment agencies are regulated by the Act on Employment Services.

An intermediary may only collect a fee for services related to the intermediation of employment for remuneration from the legal entity or natural person for whom it places an employee. The amount of the fee pursuant to the first sentence shall be negotiated by the intermediary with the legal person or natural person for whom it is placing an employee (Article 25(3) of the Act on Employment Services). An employment intermediary for remuneration who intermediates employment for remuneration is obliged by the Act on Employment Services to conclude a written agreement with the citizen on the employment intermediation for remuneration, which includes the name, address, employer's identification number and type of economic activity of the employer, the duration of the employment, the type of work, the wage or salary and other working conditions, the method and conditions of health insurance and social insurance, the extent of the intermediary's liability for non-compliance with the terms of the agreement.

The temporary employment agency may not charge the temporary agency employee a fee for the assignment to the user employer or for the conclusion of the employment relationship with the user employer after the end of the assignment; for the assignment of the temporary agency employee, the temporary employment agency may charge the user employer a fee in the agreed amount (Article 29(2) of the Act on Employment Services). The temporary employment agency shall provide the temporary agency employee with the protection provided for in the special regulations (Labour Code, Act No.125/2006 Coll. on labour inspection) with regard to working conditions and conditions of employment.

Once a year, by 31 March, the employment intermediary for remuneration and the temporary employment agency shall submit a report to the CLSAF on their activities for the previous calendar year, on the citizens for whom they have intermediated employment (employment intermediary for remuneration), on the cooperating employers to whom they have temporarily assigned employees (temporary employment agency).

Information for citizens on the statutory conditions that an intermediary of employment for remuneration and a temporary employment agency are obliged to comply with in their activities is published at www.upsvr.gov.sk. In the section "Our registers" there are lists of employment intermediaries for remuneration that are authorised to intermediate employment and authorised temporary employment agencies that operate on the basis of a decision issued by the CLSAF after the conditions laid down in the Act on Employment Services have been met.

The provision of protection to a temporary agency employee is subject to control by the competent authorities provided for by a special regulation, labour inspectorates (Act No.125/2006 Coll. on labour inspection).

Compliance with the obligations of employment intermediaries for remuneration in the performance of their activities is controlled by the control bodies of the trade licensing authorities, at the initiative of the CLSAF, they can revoke the trade license.

Compliance with employers' obligations under the Act on Employment Services (inter alia, when employing foreigners, publishing vacancies, and intermediating employment for remuneration) is checked by the employees of the control units of the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the CLSAF. They impose fines when violations are detected:

- to the employer for breach of the obligations laid down under the Act on Employment Services up to EUR 33,193.91,
- to a legal entity or natural person for carrying out the activities of a temporary employment agency without an authorisation, from EUR 5,000 to EUR 100,000,
- a legal person or natural person for breach of an obligation in employing foreigners up to EUR 100,000.

10. How do you prevent and sanction abuses of legal constructions such as self-employment, letter-box companies, sub-contracting, and posting of workers, which may be used to commit THB?

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

In terms of the legislation on the issue in question, we would like to state that in the SR, the performance of illegal work and illegal employment is prohibited by Act No. 82/2006 on illegal work and illegal employment and on the amendment to certain acts. The legal definitions of illegal work and illegal employment are also enshrined in this legal regulation.

Illegal work is dependent work carried out by a natural person for a legal entity or a natural person who is an entrepreneur where

- the natural person does not have an employment relationship or civil service relationship under a special regulation with the legal entity or natural person who is an entrepreneur or
- the natural person is a national of a country which is not a Member State of the EU, another Contracting State to the Agreement on the European Economic Area or the Swiss Confederation, or is a stateless person (hereinafter referred to as “third-country national”) and the conditions for his or her employment under a special regulation are not fulfilled.

Illegal employment is employment by a legal entity or a natural person who is an entrepreneur if they use dependent work

- of a natural person and do not have an employment relationship or civil service relationship with that person under a special regulation,
- of a natural person, have an employment relationship or civil service relationship with him or her pursuant to a special regulation and have not registered him or her in the register of insured persons and retirement pension savers within seven days of the expiry of the time limit pursuant to a special regulation for registration in that register, but at the latest until the start of the control of illegal work and illegal employment, if the control has started within seven days of the expiry of the time limit pursuant to a special regulation for registration in that register; or
- of a third-country national and the conditions for his or her employment pursuant to a special regulation are not fulfilled.

The employment of a third-country national who is staying on the territory of the SR in violation of a special regulation and who performs dependent work is also considered illegal employment.

Control of illegal work and illegal employment is carried out by labour inspectorates. If the labour inspectorate finds that an employer or a natural person has violated the prohibition of illegal employment, it shall impose a mandatory fine of between EUR 2,000 and EUR 200,00, and, in the event of illegal employment of two or more natural persons at the same time, a fine of at least EUR 5,000. Liability for violation of the obligation of illegal employment in the SR is based on the principle of absolute objective liability and therefore the employer is liable for violation of this prohibition regardless of whether it is an intentional or unintentional act.

The labour inspection system (NLI and labour inspectorates) is competent to control compliance with the rules on posting of employees for the performance of work in the provision of services, to identify the posting and to enforce fines pursuant to Act No. 351/2015 Coll. on cross-border cooperation in the posting of employees for the performance of work in the provision of services and on the amendment to certain acts. The NLI is also the liaison body of the SR for international cooperation on posting of employees.

When inspecting persons present at an employer’s workplace, labour inspectors ascertain whether the work or activity performed by the persons present is dependent work as defined in the Labour Code. The disguise of dependent work by self-employment, subcontracting (from a letter-box company or another business partner) or false posting of workers occurs in practice. To identify it, labour inspectors use the assessment of the characteristics of dependent work. If the work under assessment fulfils the characteristics of dependent work, the inspectors assess the situation as a violation of the prohibition of illegal employment. A challenge for labour inspectors in this area is chains of subcontractors or chains of companies (including intermediary companies) through which the process of temporary assignment of workers or the process of posting workers in the provision of services passes. Slovak legislation in the area of customer-supplier relations and chaining of enterprises allows the application

of the institute of co-responsibility for illegal employment. This is subsequently sanctioned by an administrative sanction as well as the detection of illegal employment itself. In terms of preventive action, the SR has introduced a mechanism for the publication of employers who have violated the prohibition of illegal employment, the sanction for which is mainly the publication in the public central register of employers who have been fined for violating the prohibition of illegal employment in the preceding five years. For employers who are published in the central register, this has a negative impact, as the labour inspectorate will not issue them with the certificates they need for state aid and support, EU funding or entry into public procurement.

11. How do your country's migration legislation and policies seek to prevent THB by enabling lawful migration and legal employment opportunities accompanied by decent work conditions?

Ministry of Interior:

There is no single act in the SR dealing specifically with the problem of THB and all its aspects (prevention, protection of victims, prosecution of perpetrators). The legal regulation of THB is mainly contained in Article 179 of Act No. 300/2005 Coll., the Criminal Code as amended (hereinafter referred to as the "Criminal Code"). Other legal acts regulate areas such as residence of foreigners, access to the Schengen area and its consequences, access to social services, SLPCSG, health insurance, labour, assistance in material need, etc. In addition to this, the Ministry of Interior issues legal regulations regulating the composition and activities of expert groups aimed at combating THB and assisting victims of THB. The legal regulation of the punishment of THB crimes is contained in the Criminal Code, where the crime of THB is regulated in Article 179. Exploitation itself consists in exploitation through prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, including pornography, forced labour or forced service, including begging, slavery or slavery-like practices, bondage, forced marriage, exploitation for the commission of crime, removal of organs, tissues or cells and other forms of exploitation.

According to Article 4(e) of the Convention, a victim of THB is any natural person who is subject to THB. Recognition as a victim of THB is a prerequisite for enjoyment of the wide range of protection and support measures enshrined in the Convention.

The **definition of a victim** is contained in the Act on Victims of Crime in Article 2(1)(b), whereby a victim is defined as:

1. a natural person who has been or is supposed to have been physically harmed, caused property damage, non-pecuniary or other damage as a result of crime, or whose rights or freedoms protected by law have been violated or threatened,
2. a relative in the direct line of descent, an adoptive parent, an adoptee, a sibling, a spouse and a person who was living in the same household as the person who was killed by the offence, as well as a dependent of the person who was killed by the offence, if they have suffered damage as a result of the death of that person; if there are more than one of these persons, each of them shall be regarded as a victim.

A particularly vulnerable victim, according to Article 2(1)(c) of the Act on Victims of Crime, means:

1. a child; a child means a person under the age of eighteen years, and if the age of the person is not known and there is reason to believe that the person is a child, the person shall be deemed to be a child until the contrary is proved,
2. a person over 75 years of age,
3. a person with a disability,
4. a victim of the offence of trafficking in human beings, the offence of involuntary disappearance, the offence of cruelty to a person close to or entrusted to the person, an offence committed by an organised group, any of the offences against human dignity, any of the offences of terrorism or the offence of domestic violence,

5. a victim of a crime committed by violence or threat of violence because of his or her gender, sexual orientation, nationality, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief,
6. a victim of another offence who is at a higher risk of re-victimisation or secondary victimisation, as determined on the basis of an individual assessment of the victim and his or her personal characteristics, relationship to or dependence on the perpetrator, the type or nature and circumstances of the offence committed.

A victim of a violent crime is defined under Article 2(1)(d) of the Act as a victim who has been:

1. injured by a deliberate violent criminal offence; if that person has died as a result of that act, the victim of a violent crime shall also be the surviving spouse of the deceased and the surviving children of the deceased and, if there are none, the surviving parent of the deceased and a person who has lived in the same household with the deceased for at least one year prior to the death and who has shared the care of the household with the deceased, or a person who was dependent on the deceased for maintenance,
2. non-pecuniary damage caused by the **crime of trafficking in human beings**, rape, sexual violence, sexual abuse, cruelty to a person close or entrusted to the person or involuntary disappearance.

In Order of the Ministry of Interior No. 161 of December 2020 on the provision of the Assistance Programme, the concept of a victim of THB is introduced in conjunction with the Act on Victims of Crime. Victims of THB cooperate with non-governmental organisations contracted by the Ministry of Interior (SCC and GCC), which provide them with isolation from the criminal environment, the possibility of suitable and safe accommodation, help in assisted voluntary return, social assistance, social counselling, psychological counselling, psychotherapeutic services, interpreting and translation services, legal counselling, healthcare, retraining courses, the possibility of being included in a witness protection programme, the possibility of one-off financial compensation and information on tolerated stay on the territory of the SR and, if necessary, information on the possibility of applying for international protection if the THB victim is a third-country national. In accordance with the service contract, the SCC must have an expert guarantor for legal counselling, which was one of the conditions of the public procurement procedure. The SCC provides legal counselling as a service of the programme to each victim enrolled in the Assistance Programme. Also, under the Act on Victims of Crime, victims of THB have the right to receive specialised professional assistance for 90 days, in addition to general professional assistance, regardless of the filing of a criminal complaint or their active participation in the criminal proceedings.

Regularisation of residence: Pursuant to Article 58(1)(c) of Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on the residence of foreigners and on the amendment to certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the “Act on the Residence of Foreigners”), the police department shall grant a tolerated stay to a third-country national who is a victim of THB, unless there are grounds for refusal of the application pursuant to Article 59(12), if he/she is at least 18 years old; the police department or a person authorised by the Ministry of Interior shall inform the third-country national of the possibility and conditions of granting tolerated stay on this ground and of the rights and obligations arising therefrom. Pursuant to Article 59(10) of the Act on the Residence of Foreigners, the Ministry of Interior shall provide a third-country national who has been granted tolerated stay pursuant to Article 58(1)(c) or (2) with adequate accommodation if he/she is unable to arrange it himself/herself. Pursuant to Article 59(11) of the Act on the Residence of Foreigners, the law enforcement authority or the person authorised by the Ministry of Interior shall inform the third-country national who has been granted tolerated stay pursuant to paragraph 6 of any assistance programmes or projects aimed at enabling his/her integration into society throughout the duration of the tolerated stay. The fact that a person is a victim of THB is not a ground for granting permanent residence, and the Slovak legal system does not provide for the granting of a residence permit on humanitarian grounds. A victim of THB may apply for asylum under Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on asylum and on the amendment to certain acts, but asylum cannot be granted on the sole ground that the person is a victim of THB. The provision of Article 9 of the Asylum Act allows for the granting of asylum on humanitarian grounds; in the asylum procedure, it is assessed whether the victim falls

within the scope of a “humanitarian case”, e.g. the “traumatisation” of the asylum seeker is assessed by means of an expert opinion from the psychiatry department, the preparation of which, often repeated, is requested by the MO MI SR. A victim of THB may be granted permanent residence for five years under Article 45a of the Act on the Residence of Foreigners even without fulfilling the conditions set out in this Act, if the trafficked victim is considered to be a threatened or protected witness in criminal proceedings and if the granting of such residence is necessary to provide protection and assistance to the witness under the Witness Protection Act. Under the Assistance Programme, a victim of THB may also be granted permanent residence for five years if it is in the interest of the SR pursuant to Article 43(1)(e) of the Act on the Residence of Foreigners. The above-quoted provisions on tolerated stay apply only to “victims of THB if they are at least 18 years of age” (both tolerated stay during the recovery and reflection period and tolerated stay granted after the expiry of this period). In cases of UMs, the court appoints a guardian, and UMs are placed in a CCF, where they are cared for in the same way as Slovak children. The guardian of the child may file an application for tolerated stay on behalf of the minor and also an application for asylum. The Asylum Act contains special provisions concerning minor asylum seekers, e.g. according to Article 22(5) of the Asylum Act, the Ministry of Interior shall ensure appropriate medical care for minor asylum seekers who are victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation, torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or who have suffered from the consequences of armed conflict. Child victims of THB - foreigners and adult victims of THB who are granted a period of recovery and trafficked persons granted tolerated stay cannot be administratively expelled from the territory of the SR. Under Article 83(8)(a) and (c) of the Act on the Residence of Foreigners, a police department cannot (a) administratively expel a child under the age of 18; this does not apply if the expulsion of the child is in the child’s best interests (c) a third-country national under Article 58(1)(c) (who is a victim of THB if he or she is at least 18 years of age) during the period referred to in Article 58(3) (period for recovery and reflection). However, each trafficked victim may decide whether he/she wishes to voluntarily return to his/her country of origin or last residence or to another third country that will accept him/her.

Legal assistance/representation: The Act on the SLPCSG and the Code of Civil Procedure provide that any child who finds himself or herself without any care or whose life, health or favourable development is seriously endangered or impaired shall be appointed a guardian by the court. According to the Act on the SLPCSG, measures for the protection of the child are to respect the child’s “best interests” as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Measures of the SLPCSG are implemented not only for children, but also for adult natural persons up to 25 years of age (so-called young adults).

All entities implementing measures under the Act on the SLPCSG are obliged to ensure that the rights of the child are not endangered or violated and to provide the child with the protection and care necessary for his or her well-being and the protection of his or her legally protected interests. The Code of Civil Procedure regulates the procedure for the appointment of a guardian. If a minor child finds himself or herself without any care or if his or her life, health or favourable development is seriously endangered or impaired, the court shall order that the minor child be temporarily entrusted to the care of another person (natural or legal). The court shall continuously monitor the manner in which the guardian performs his/her functions. The guardian, both temporary and permanent, must act in the best interests of the child in any procedure concerning the child. If a guardian is appointed for a child victim of THB, the guardian shall participate in all procedures concerning the child, not excluding return to the country of origin.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

The Act on Employment Services is a legal regulation governing the conditions of employment of third-country nationals on the territory of the SR. The relevant provisions of the Act on Employment Services provide, inter alia, for a domestic legal entity or natural person when employing a national to

be responsible for working conditions and conditions of employment in accordance with the Labour Code.

12. How do your country's law and policies to discourage demand that leads to THB address particular vulnerabilities and groups at risk of THB?

Ministry of Justice of the SR (hereinafter referred to as the "Ministry of Justice"):

As part of its 2023 subsidy scheme for the promotion of human rights, the Ministry of Justice supported a project called "STOP THB", which aimed to educate and raise awareness among workers in aid organisations on the topic of THB.

The use of services of a victim of THB has not been criminalised yet in the SR. For the sake of completeness, it should be added that the introduction of the criminalisation of the use of services of a victim of THB has been repeatedly proposed by the Ministry of Justice in the framework of the comprehensive amendment of the Criminal Code. The draft amendment to the Criminal Code introduces a new offence of "use of services of a victim of THB", by which the SR also responds to the recommendation of GRETA, it is an addition in the framework of the third evaluation round of the SR. There were **no** significant reservations, either technical or political, on this particular issue during the legislative process. Unfortunately, for political reasons (early parliamentary elections in September 2023), the final approval of this legislative material by Parliament did not take place. The Ministry of Justice will resubmit this proposal to the legislative process after the 2023 parliamentary elections, including a proposal to criminalise the use of services of victims of THB (professional level).

The pending unapproved proposal (Bill to amend the Criminal Code - Parliamentary Print Number 1528):

"Article 179a

Use of services of a victim of THB

(1) Whoever uses the services of a person who is a victim of THB resulting from the exploitation of such a person referred to in Article 179, shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of one to five years.

(2) The offender shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of three to eight years if he/she commits an act referred to in paragraph 1

(a) and obtains therefrom a greater benefit for themselves or for another,

(b) and by such act places another in danger of serious bodily harm or death,

(c) as a public official,

(d) on a protected person,

(e) for a special motive, or

(f) in a more serious manner.

(3) The offender shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of four to ten years if he/she commits an act referred to in paragraph 1

(a) and obtains therefrom a considerable benefit for themselves or for another or

(b) and causes thereby grievous bodily harm or death or other particularly serious consequences.

(4) The offender shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of seven to twelve years if he/she commits an act referred to in paragraph 1

(a) and obtains by it for themselves or for another a benefit on a large scale,

(b) and thereby causes grievous bodily harm to more than one person or the death of more than one or

(c) as a member of a dangerous group."

Ministry of Interior:

The establishment of systemic state policies aimed at reducing the demand for goods and services in which victims may have been exploited is still absent in the SR. This area undoubtedly deserves the attention of the state authorities, and cooperation with trade unions and the production, trade and service sectors is also essential. This is a cross-cutting area which, in its complexity, goes beyond the competence of a single ministry.

In accordance with Government Resolution of the SR No. 380/2021 on the responsibility of individual state bodies to implement the recommendations of the 3rd round of the evaluation of the SR by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of the Council of Europe (GRETA) on the implementation of the Convention, the Ministry of Interior and the NLI are obliged to deal with two tasks related to addressing the demand side of the issue. These are the tasks of proactively working with the private sector to raise awareness of the important role and responsibility of businesses in preventing THB in supply chains and to strengthen legislative, administrative, educational, social, cultural or other measures to discourage the demand for the services of victims of THB for all forms of abuse, in partnership with civil society, trade unions and the media. Pursuant to the Government Resolution in question, the Ministry of Justice has proposed, as part of the amendment of the Criminal Code, to increase the criminal penalties for the offence of THB and to introduce a new offence of knowingly using the services of victims of THB.

As noted above, in order to reduce the demand for services that support all forms of THB, legislative measures are identified and included in the area of criminal proceedings. These must also be supported through prevention activities. They include, in particular, the implementation of education, training and awareness-raising activities. This is taken into account in the National Programme 2019-2023 currently in force, as well as in the forthcoming National Programme 2024-2028. In the period under review, the departments of the Ministry of Interior were involved in the campaign on combating THB for sexual exploitation, which was created by the General Directorate for Combating Organised Crime of the Ministry of Interior of Bulgaria, with the support of the *European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats/EMPACT*, belonging to EUROPOL. The aim of the campaign was to draw the attention of the public and vulnerable groups to the ways of engaging in THB, the identification and support of victims, as well as the client and demand side. Information Offices also have a role to play in this area, their details are provided in the answer to question 6(b) of the questionnaire. In line with the comprehensive approach to reducing the demand for victim services, the explanatory memorandum to the proposal for a Directive amending Directive 2011/36/EU mentions a non-legislative measure in the form of a Europe-wide information campaign aimed at discouraging the demand that supports THB, thus ensuring a Europe-wide reach of the targeted group. The above is also included in the National Programme 2024-2028 currently under preparation:

Measure 7 Addressing the demand side of victim services through legislative measures;

Measure 17 Implementation of non-legislative measures to reduce the demand for victim services and the timeliness of victim identification.

Efforts to reduce demand in the field of THB were implemented in 2022 through controls on the conditions for the performance of employment intermediation for remuneration and the conditions for the performance of activities of temporary employment agencies, which are regulated by the Act on Employment Services. Information on active temporary employment agencies, supported employment agencies and employment intermediaries for remuneration is available to the public on the CLSAF website; they have a legal obligation to provide the CLSAF with an annual report on their activities for the previous calendar year by 31 March. The current number of persons involved in detecting risks and proving elements of THB (e.g. coercion to work without an employment contract, documented minimum wage and the rest in the form of “envelope wages”, provision of a commission for preferential hiring, covert or overt threats of consequences for disclosing coercion) is disproportionate to the number of existing covert and overt THB risks.

Ministry of Economy of the SR (hereinafter referred to as the “Ministry of Economy”):

At EU level, a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market has been submitted to bring a new potential level of protection against the phenomenon of forced labour as one of the possible consequences of THB. The draft regulation is currently in the discussion phase at the level of the EU Council working groups, in which representatives of the SR are also participating. The draft regulation draws attention to the increased vulnerability of certain groups, especially children, and their susceptibility to exploitation through forced labour.

13. How do your country's legislation and practice ensure that there is an individual assessment of protection needs at the borders prior to any refusals of entry or expulsions?

Ministry of Interior:

Pursuant to Article 1(3) of Act No. 171/1993 Coll. on the Police Force, the Police Force is governed in its activities by the Constitution, constitutional acts, laws and other generally binding legal regulations and international treaties by which the SR is bound. Therefore, a member of the Police Force must also strictly observe all principles relating to non-discrimination of persons in the performance of his/her activities. This obligation is also directly derived from Article 7 of the Schengen Borders Code when carrying out border control.

When carrying out border control tasks, Police Force members also act in accordance with Article 4 of the Schengen Borders Code, which is elaborated in national legislation as follows:

- According to Article 12 of the Act on the Residence of Foreigners and on the amendment to certain acts, as amended, entry cannot be refused to a third-country national if he/she has submitted an asylum application during the border control;

- Article 81 of the Act on the Residence of Foreigners and on the amendment to certain acts, as amended, lists the obstacles to administrative expulsion, which read as follows:

(1) A foreigner may not be administratively expelled to a state in which his or her life would be threatened on account of his or her race, nationality, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or in which he or she would be in danger of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Similarly, a foreigner may not be administratively expelled to a state in which the death penalty has been imposed or is likely to be imposed in pending criminal proceedings.

(2) A foreigner may not be administratively expelled to a state in which his or her freedom would be threatened on account of his or her race, nationality, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; this shall not apply if the foreigner's actions endanger the security of the state or if he or she has been convicted of a crime and poses a danger to the SR.

(3) A stateless person may be administratively expelled only if his or her actions endanger the security of the state or public order and the obstacles to administrative expulsion under paragraphs 1 and 2 do not apply to him or her.

(4) A foreigner may not be administratively expelled even to a state in which he or she is threatened with forced return to the state pursuant to paragraph 1 or paragraph 2.

(5) The police department shall not consider the obstacles to administrative expulsion pursuant to paragraphs 1 to 4 in administrative expulsion proceedings if the grounds pursuant to paragraphs 1 to 4 have been finally decided upon by another state authority in other proceedings and there has been no change in the individual situation of the foreigner concerned.

Officers of the Border and Foreign Police Service of the BBFP P PF are educated and trained in relation to the issue of THB and, as a subject of the Assistance Programme, are obliged to focus on THB indicators in their official activities, based on a set of identification questions set out in the Order on the Assistance Programme.

14. What measures are taken to prevent THB in sports? What sectors and categories/groups of people have been identified as being at risk?

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

The SR does not regulate the facts in relation to THB in sport directly regulated in Act No. 440/2015 on sport and on the amendment to certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the “Act on Sport”). As regards the following provisions from the Act on Sport, this is a rather expansive interpretation with implications for forced labour. The pre-contractual relations referred to in the Act on Sport guarantee fundamental rights to athletes. In this respect, it is important that athletes are entitled to a wage or, in the event of non-payment of a wage, they can immediately terminate the contract for the professional practice of sport. In the Act on Sport, contractual relations in sport are regulated in the third chapter and below, with Article 31 regulating the general provisions as follows:

(1) Prior to the conclusion of a contract between an athlete and a sports organisation, the sports organisation is obliged to inform the athlete of the rights and obligations arising for him/her from the contractual relationship.

(2) The capacity of an athlete to have rights and obligations in contractual relations under this Act and the capacity to acquire those rights and assume those obligations by his/her own legal acts, unless otherwise provided for in paragraph 3.

(3) The conclusion of a written contract with an athlete aged 15 to 18 years requires the expression of the athlete’s legal guardian in the form of a signature on the contract or on the deed itself, which forms part of the contract.

(4) A contract between an athlete and a sports organisation, the subject matter of which is the performance of sport by the athlete for the sports organisation, and a contract between a sports professional and a sports organisation, the subject matter of which is the performance of sport by the sports professional for the sports organisation, may not contain a restriction on sporting activity after the end of their contractual relationship.

(5) The period between the date of signing the contract and its effective date may not exceed one year, otherwise it shall be null and void.

At the same time, Article 33 of the Act on Sport regulates the basic obligations of a sports organisation as follows:

A sports organisation for which an athlete performs a sport on the basis of a contract for the professional performance of sport has the following basic obligations:

(a) to ensure the continuous preparation of the athlete for competition and the participation of the athlete in competition under the guidance of a coach with the required professional competence,

(b) to pay the athlete the agreed salary,

(c) to create suitable conditions for the performance of the sport,

(d) to enable the athlete to participate in the sports representation,

(e) to provide for the athlete’s healthcare, regeneration and rest in connection with the performance of the sport,

(f) to enable the athlete to prepare for a profession if he/she is a pupil of a secondary school or a student of an university.

Article 34(5) of the Act on Sport provides that when concluding a contract for the professional performance of sport, a sports organisation is obliged to treat athletes in accordance with the principle of equal treatment under a special regulation, pursuant to Article 2 of Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and on the amendment to certain acts (Anti-Discrimination Act), as amended.

Article 36 of the Act on Sport states that the wage of an athlete performing sport on the basis of a contract for professional performance of sport is considered a wage according to the Labour Code and the wage may not be lower than the minimum wage according to Act No.633/2007 Coll. on the minimum wage, as amended. It also states that the provisions of the Labour Code shall apply mutatis

mutandis to the due date, payment of wages and deductions from wages. The Act on Sport also regulates, for example, working time and rest, obstacles to the exercise of sport, or the exercise of sport without a contract.

15. Have you identified online practices that may increase the risk of becoming a victim of THB for different forms of exploitation? What mechanisms have been developed to prevent the misuse of information and communication technology for THB purposes? What is the practical effect of their implementation?

Ministry of Interior:

From the application practice of the Cybercrime Department of the National Centre for Special Types of Crime of the Presidium of the Police Force (hereinafter referred to as the “Cybercrime Department of the NCSTC”), based on cases related to the detection and investigation of child pornography, it can be stated that a number of online platforms or social networks have been identified where minors create user profiles. These minors add their own photographs and videos to their profiles, without the profiles themselves being set up in such a way that they are not accessible to the general public, including potential perpetrators of THB (e.g. Facebook, Instagram). Platforms where user profiles cannot be made non-public were also identified; these appear to be the most risky (TikTok). It is then very easy for these perpetrators to contact these minors, or to use a public profile to find out personal information leading to the identification of potential victims and to the location of their whereabouts. However, the above may also apply to adults who do not have a secure profile and, according to publicly available information and photographs, may represent a potential target for the perpetrators of this crime. These persons may consequently be at risk of possible THB, especially if they come from weaker social backgrounds (in the SR, especially MRC). The Cybercrime Department of the NCSTC participates in educational activities aimed at increasing the safety of children and the general public in the online space. In particular, the aim of the activities is to raise public awareness of the risks of the online space. These activities are implemented as tasks from the Action Plan for the National Concept for the Protection of Children in the Digital Space.

The NUFIM BBFP P PF stated on the issue that it sees the increased risk in the online space in relation to THB crime mainly in the low awareness of online threats, pitfalls and practices in the field of THB, in addition, it is mainly the low age of the victims, who through their credulity and naivety can easily succumb to the seemingly tempting offer of traffickers. To date, no mechanisms have been developed to prevent the misuse of ICT for THB purposes. In the near future, the NUFIM BBFP P PF plans to establish contact and possible cooperation with the operators of internet platforms that have been misused in the past to commit THB crimes.

Technological advances allow traffickers to lure, offer, exploit, and control victims remotely and to disseminate exploitation-related material online in bulk. At the same time, the same technological means make it more difficult to detect crime, identify perpetrators and trace the money used to commit crimes and the proceeds of crime. During the period under review, it was therefore important to disseminate education and raise awareness in relation to the pitfalls of the online space and the issue of THB. In 2020, thanks to the information channels available through EUROPOL, the CPD OMI SR approached the Australian state institution eSafety, thanks to which the brochure “*COVID-19 Pandemic: Advice on Online Safety for Parents*” was created. Under one chapter on Unwanted Contact and Grooming, the contact details for the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818 are listed, amongst others. The brochure was also sent electronically by personal letter to all employees of the Ministry of Interior. The online brochure in the Slovak language has been published at: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-06/Slovak.pdf>. In May 2021, the conference “Ending Trafficking in Children and Young Persons” was organised by the Council of Europe together with the German Presidency of the Council of Europe, to which the IC MI SR was also invited. The aim of this conference was to share experience and promote discussion on different aspects of

preventing and combating trafficking in children and young people within a victim-centred and human rights approach, one of the topics being the abuse for THB via the internet. The conference resulted in conclusions with recommendations for the preparation of European legislation that will protect users in the online space and, on the other hand, reflect the needs of law enforcement authorities.

As in the previous period, it is necessary to continue to deepen inter-ministerial cooperation and cooperation with the private sector in connection with the above-mentioned issue, with an effort to encourage private companies to take responsibility for the prevention of THB in the online space. However, cooperation between stakeholders, not only at national but also at international level, is important in combating THB. In addition to the necessary cooperation, there must be mutual information between these actors.

The IC MI SR is currently preparing a new National Programme for 2024-2028, which responds to the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2011/36/EU, with a focus on addressing the challenges associated with the increasing digitalisation of THB and strengthening the criminal justice response to crimes facilitated by technology. The forthcoming National Programme for 2024-2028 sets out the following strategic objectives in the area of prevention:

- implementation of targeted information activities and campaigns in the field of combating THB for multiple target groups, in cooperation with civil society, international organisations, private sector, at national as well as international level, with an emphasis on the online space,
- finding solutions to encourage private companies to take responsibility for preventing trafficking in human beings, including in the online environment.

The forthcoming Action Plan for 2024-2028 defines, among others, measures aimed at improving the response to the issue of combating THB in the online space:

- Measure No. 8: Deepening international police cooperation, Strategic Objective No. 1: Improving the response of law enforcement authorities to the perpetration of the THB crime through technology.
- Measure No. 9: Proactively searching for potential victims of trafficking in the online space.

16. What measures are taken to raise awareness of the risks of technology-facilitated THB, including among children, parents, teachers, child care professionals and social workers? What technology-based initiatives exist in your country to disseminate information to groups/communities at risk of THB?

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

Within the framework of the measures taken by the SR to reduce the risks of technology-facilitated THB and at the same time to promote critical thinking and evaluation of disseminated content and information also in the online environment, the following should be mentioned for the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport:

● **Establishment of uniform standards for professional and professional-methodological activities**

The standards are intended to ensure that children with diverse needs and their families receive the same quality of care throughout Slovakia. The standards are created in the interests of children and their families, but the agents of this change are all professional and pedagogical staff in school support teams and school counselling and prevention facilities. These are performance (e.g. "Prevention" standard) and content standards. Available at: <https://vudpap.sk/hlavne-cinnosti/standardy-odbornych-cinnosti/>. Creation of manuals for novice civil employees in education: school psychologist, social pedagogue, therapeutic pedagogue, a manual for school support team, which also discusses prevention against THB, a manual for school support team. The thematic area for preventive activities, the part Content Standards for the Prevention of Selected Areas of Risky Behaviour includes the Content

Standard for the prevention of THB. The aim of prevention of THB is to ensure knowledge of the issue of THB, to know the most common scenarios of recruiting victims, to know the forms and methods of THB, as well as to know the basic human rights and to acquire the skills to avoid becoming a victim or to be able to mediate help to a victim.

The specific objective is to impart knowledge and teach skills on how and where to get reliable information on working abroad, to know how to prepare for a trip abroad, to know and be aware of the possibilities of assistance abroad and to acquire concrete skills on what to do when in trouble abroad.

Three basic characteristics of specific prevention of THB:

1. a direct and explicit relationship to the field of THB and related topics,
2. a clear time and space bounded implementation axis: mapping of needs, programme design and preparation, programme implementation and evaluation, and follow-up,
3. targeting of a clearly defined target group and the associated assignment of a specific group or individual to a given type of programme corresponding to the needs and problems of the target group.

Prevention focuses on three pillars:

Knowledge, expertise - this is information and knowledge related to the area of THB and prevention of THB (e.g. what is THB, description of the crime of THB, knowledge about the structure and characteristics of victims, the mechanism of THB, know the characteristics of THB, the purposes of THB, have knowledge about human rights and what to do if I get into trouble abroad), which they acquire through study and then apply in practice in the form of competences. **The aim is to equip children with key information appropriate to their age.**

Skills - mean the ability to apply expertise. They can be understood as a set of procedures, methods, behaviours and actions with which a child is able to work appropriately for his/her age and level. These are self-management skills and social skills. They include the following skills: critical thinking skills, creative thinking skills, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, stress management skills, emotion management skills, empathy skills, assertiveness and communication skills, ability to withstand social pressure, media literacy, ability to anticipate the consequences of one's behaviour, ability to refuse.

Competences - the ability to apply acquired knowledge, expertise and skills in specific situations. **The aim is to equip children with key competences appropriate to their age.**

- Within the framework of Act No. 138/2019 on pedagogical and professional staff and on the amendment to certain acts, the **category of professional employee at school** has been introduced in Article 19:

school digital coordinator who provides:

- (a) advice and technical assistance on the introduction of new digital methods in education,
- (b) feedback to the school's pedagogical employees on the application and use of digital methods and forms of upbringing and education and digital resources used in upbringing and education,
- (c) **training in the use of digital content or forms of working with digital content,**
- (d) digital material on educational standards for teaching subjects or learning areas,
- (e) regular information on the possibilities of using digital technologies in upbringing and education and the possibilities of ensuring cybersecurity,
- (f) advice on digital technologies,
- (g) administration of online testing,
- (h) availability of external educational resources.

- Curriculum reform for primary schools

On 31 March 2023, the **new curriculum for primary schools** was approved and expert working groups involving hundreds of experts worked on the development of key documents. The key documents went through 3 rounds of public consultation involving both teachers and parents.

The new curriculum will be tested from 1 September 2023. 109 primary schools have signed up for the pilot validation, from which the expert team has selected a pilot group of 40 schools to start teaching according to the new State Educational Programme from September. From 1 September 2023,

capacity in the area of international agenda, which is key to harmonised regulation of digital platforms. We believe that such steps can also be a preventive measure in the fight against THB.

Ministry of Interior:

As already mentioned in the answer to question 16, public awareness raising on THB issues is ensured, inter alia, by publishing and updating information on the website of the Ministry of Interior, on Facebook, Instagram or YouTube channel. The IC MI SR also develops cooperation with Slovak Telekom, a.s. for the purpose of operating the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818. The NUFIM BBFP P PF, dealing with the detection and investigation of THB crimes as a priority, cooperates with the above-mentioned companies in cases where ICT (internet or social network) has been used as a means of recruitment or exploitation itself, in order to obtain evidence for criminal proceedings. The subject area is also addressed in the forthcoming National Programme for 2024-2028 and the Action Plan for 2024-2028, as mentioned in the answer to question 15.

18. How are policies and practices aimed at preventing THB informed by the experiences of victims and at-risk individuals?

Ministry of Interior:

Based on the recorded cases and experiences of identified victims of THB, the Ministry of Interior departments set policies and procedures aimed at preventing THB in order to raise awareness of the general public about this phenomenon as effectively and efficiently as possible, with the setting of strategic objectives and measures to combat THB, within the framework of the currently valid strategic documents, such as the National Programme and Action Plan for 2019-2023, as well as within the framework of the forthcoming National Programme and Action Plan for 2024-2028. The measures taken in the field of prevention were implemented during the period under review through campaigns carried out by the departments of the Ministry of Interior, as mentioned in the answer to question 4(b), as well as through education and training activities.

Awareness-raising on THB mainly includes lecturing and training activities for both the professional and the general public, which were carried out by state and non-state actors for different target groups during the period under review, and the promotion of the topic of THB through different types of media.

Each year, in order to fulfil the tasks in the current National Programme of Action, a training schedule is drawn up to increase the expertise of state and non-state actors in the field of THB, with a focus on victim identification and the dissemination of the National Referral Mechanism, with a view to the early identification of victims of THB. During the period under review, the IC MI SR organised or participated as a trainer in training/awareness-raising/educational activities for officers of communication and prevention departments of regional headquarters of the Police Force and internal departments of district headquarters of the Police Force, for children from CCFs throughout the territory of the SR; for members of the Armed Forces of the SR and the Ministry of Defence of the SR; for consular staff in the framework of pre-departure preparation, for diplomatic staff and staff of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs; for investigators of the Police Force in cooperation with the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava and the Investigation Department of the Criminal Police Office of the Presidium of the Police Force, as part of the implementation of the national project "Special interrogation rooms for child victims and other particularly vulnerable victims of crime" co-financed by the EU from the Internal Security Fund. At the same time, the IC MI SR provided lectures in cooperation with the NUFIM BBFP P PF on the issue of THB for the marginalised Roma community, as well as for members of local civil order services, organised by the OGPRC, or training of hotel staff in order to obtain a basic minimum in the field of THB and victim identification and

online training for the staff of the Legal Aid Centre, which were completed by all offices throughout the territory of the SR. The NUFIM BBFP P PF with the aim of raising awareness on THB has worked intensively in the field of education and conducted training activities for members of the Police Force, CCF directors, cadets of the Academy of the Police Force, for members of local civil order services, members of Roma communities and hotel staff. At the same time, the NUFIM BBFP P PF conducted lectures for students of grammar and secondary vocational schools. Officers of communication and prevention departments of regional headquarters of the Police Force and internal departments of district headquarters of the Police Force carried out preventive activities (lectures, discussions) for pupils of higher grades of primary schools, preventive activities for students of secondary schools, preventive activities for seniors and preventive activities for “other participants”. During the period under review, the CPD OMI SR and the Information Offices conducted preventive lectures on THB among children and youth of primary and secondary schools, grammar schools and other institutions for children. As part of the lectures and trainings, the departments of the Ministry of Interior use the film IVAN, which is a victim’s testimony. Other films are also used in the training module, and these are short films from abroad. An exhibition “Do you know what your child is doing now?”, focusing on alcohol and drug addiction, which can increase children’s vulnerability to THB, is being implemented in cooperation with the Košice District Office. In Košice, this exhibition is installed in the Gallery section of the District Office and is open to the public from October 2023. The event was launched on the occasion of the EU Anti-Trafficking Day and as part of the awareness-raising activities that intensified during October. The Slovak Republic has also joined the Blue Heart campaign as of 18 October 2023, which is a campaign of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/UNODC, through which other countries around the world disseminate information on the issue of combating THB and raise awareness among the general public. As part of the campaign, the Ministry of Interior held a press conference to launch the Blue Heart campaign and at the same time illuminated an important Slovak building - the Presidential Palace in Bratislava - in the campaign colour - blue.

The Ministry of Interior created and published an information brochure “Responsibility for failure to report and prevent a crime”, which contains information on the obligation to report crimes, recommendations on reporting procedures and contacts to assistance entities.

In response to the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the departments of the Ministry of Interior participated in the development and distribution of an information leaflet, which was transformed into an information brochure, currently in 6 languages, which was distributed to a wide range of state and non-state actors in relevant locations.

In 2022, the IC MI SR implemented a nationwide educational activity in cooperation with the CLSAF and the Presidium of the Police Force for children from CCFs, within the entire territory of the Slovak Republic.

In the period under review, the departments of the Ministry of Interior gave interviews in the media on the basis of demand and filled the Facebook page dedicated to the issue of THB, which serves as one of the tools of communication with the public, published press releases, interviews, discussions, reports and posts were also published on the Facebook page of the Police of the SR. Awareness-raising and information materials on the topic of THB supplied by the IC MI SR were distributed to the communication and prevention departments of the regional headquarters of the Police Force.

In 2022, the IC MI SR published an analysis on labour exploitation, the intention of which was to contribute to the improvement of the process of detection and investigation of the crime of THB and to provide insight into the issue of THB for the purpose of labour exploitation and violation of the provisions of the Labour Code, with the aim of defining the boundaries between the THB for the purpose of forced labour and poor working conditions. In view of the above, a working group consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the General Prosecutor’s Office, the CLSAF, and the NLI was set up. After a thorough analysis of the area in question, the following points were included in the suggestions and ideas for further action to ensure improvement of the current situation by the experts represented in the working group, as well as by

the participants in the workshop held during the month of June 2023, following the resolution of Task No. 17 of the Action Plan for 2019-2023: systematic community outreach work to educate communities to prevent becoming a victim; building a network of trusted points of contact within communities that could identify a victim of THB and refer them to helping organisations and the police, in accordance with the National Referral Mechanism; raising awareness of THB among a wide range of the population through information and awareness-raising campaigns, including through the use of social networks; implementation of preventive activities in primary schools (in the last two years) and in secondary schools, taking into account the higher level of vulnerability and susceptibility of children; rigorous verification of all relevant facts giving rise to suspicion of the commission of a crime, in accordance with the provisions of Act No. 301/2005 Coll., Code of Criminal Procedure, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Code of Criminal Procedure”), regulating the procedure prior to the initiation of a criminal prosecution and in the light of the principle of proper ascertainment of the facts of the case to the extent necessary for a decision pursuant to Article 2(10) of the Code of Criminal Procedure; consistent application of the institutes of criminal law in order to impose an adequate punishment on the perpetrator in an appropriate amount; use of Article 251(a) of the Criminal Code in the application practice in adequate cases; continuation of awareness-raising and provision of advice to both employers and natural persons - employees, which would emphasise the need to comply with the favourable working conditions and obligations arising from the labour-law relations of employees performing work in the territory of the SR within the meaning of the Labour Code, as well as the need to comply with the regulations governing the legality of their employment; extension of awareness-raising for third-country nationals who are interested in working on the territory of the SR to include their native or otherwise understandable language, or to involve other relevant Slovak authorities in this education, or to transfer it in an appropriate way beyond the borders of the SR to the most frequent countries of origin of these employees (e.g. by using mass media); sensitisation of professional groups to the vulnerable position of victims in accordance with national and European legislation; specialisation of prosecutors at the level of regional prosecutor’s offices with a focus on trafficking in human beings; carrying out inspections with particular emphasis on the employment and working conditions of foreigners on the Slovak labour market; finding solutions to prevent the concealment of the employment relationship; finding solutions to sanction entities that carry out employment intermediation for remuneration and temporary employment agencies when they deliberately exploit clients.

SCC:

Based on the experience gained in direct contact with persons at risk and victims of THB in the provision of Assistance Programme services, the SCC focuses its preventive activities primarily on the most vulnerable and at-risk population groups identified among homeless people, minors and adolescents from CCFs, women in crisis centres, members of Roma communities. A useful preventive tool is a video/film depicting the real story of a victim.

In an effort to raise awareness and sensitise the general public, the SCC has currently prepared an exhibition of 15 photographs with a story. Each of the photographs carries with it the real story of a victim of THB. The exhibition is located in the Client Centre in the capital city of Bratislava. A large number of people obtain documents at this place every day. By presenting the difficult fates of individual victims of THB, the SCC spreads awareness about the phenomenon of THB and at the same time appeals to the wider society to be aware of the risks that threaten the most vulnerable and to be attentive to their surroundings.

The specific experience of a potential victim of THB can be highlighted: Mr G. was referred to the SCC by a foreign institution in the Czech Republic in January 2021. At that time he was living at a bus stop. He was surviving in light clothes that did not correspond to the season and he ate only what people brought him. He had no personal belongings, money or documents. He didn’t even have

citizenship, let alone permanent residency and health insurance. However, it was suspected that he had been labour exploited for many years. In cooperation with local institutions, the charity arranged for his return to Slovakia and, as a potential victim of THB, he was included in the Assistance Programme through which he received decent safe accommodation, healthcare and was provided with the basic necessities of life. After basic stabilisation, he was assisted in acquiring citizenship, an identity card, health insurance and was granted a pension. The charity helped him to acquire a hearing aid which enabled him to communicate significantly better. He was placed in work integration. He enjoyed working on the revitalisation of the charity's garden, thrived and charity staff even managed to reunite him with family he had not seen for over 40 years. The touching reunion helped greatly in the healing process from all he had been through. Despite his old age - he is over 70 - and his difficult life situation, he is always good-humoured and hard-working. He is now in a facility where he can live out the autumn of his life with dignity.

In 2020, the Slovak Catholic Charity implemented a campaign called Online Cinema: Global Awareness Campaign - on modern slavery to raise awareness and combat the practice. The campaign was launched on the occasion of International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December. The Slovak Catholic Charity has established cooperation with The WHY, a non-profit organisation whose aim is to provide and mediate free access to information for all. Their main activity is the production and distribution of documentaries on human rights, democracy, justice and equality. The campaign is based on the belief that highlighting and discussing the issue of modern slavery is just as important, if not more so, at a time of pandemic. Films dealing with contemporary THB issues have been made available online in several languages.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS AND PROTECTION OF THEIR RIGHTS (Articles 10, 11, 12, 14 and 16)

19. Among the victims of THB identified, were any subjected to exploitation on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (LGBTI+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex), especially teenagers and young adults? If yes, did any of them report on police misconduct?

Ministry of Interior:

On the basis of the Act on Victims of Crime, the Order on the Assistance Programme, Act No. 171/1993 Coll. on the Police Force, as well as the Schengen Code, it can be stated that the above-mentioned legislation contains provisions on non-discrimination of persons/victims of crime in relation to their sexual orientation. A definition of a victim of crime is provided in the answer to question 11. The NUFIM BBFP P PF does not record information that any of the identified victims of THB have been subjected to exploitation on the basis of their sexual/gender identity. It also does not record any complaint about the conduct of the police towards such victims. No victim of THB who was subjected to exploitation on the basis of sexual or gender identity was included in the Assistance Programme. The Office of the Inspection Service of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the "OIS MI SR") is a special part of the Police Force with nationwide competence for detection, investigation and summary investigation of crimes committed by armed security forces. In addition to the investigation and summary investigation of criminal offences of members of the Police Force, the competence of the OIS MI SR includes the investigation and summary investigation of criminal offences of members of the Prison and Judicial Guard Corps and the investigation and summary investigation of criminal offences of customs officers. Within the scope defined by the Minister of Interior, the OIS MI SR also performs tasks in the field of internal control, financial control, protection of personal data, handling of complaints, handling of petitions and the tasks of the responsible person under special regulations within the competence of the Ministry of Interior. Within the framework of the official activities of the OIS MI SR and the Control Department of the Presidium

of the Police Force no case of inappropriate behaviour of the Police Force officers towards victims of THB was found to have been registered.

20. What specific measures are taken to ensure that trafficked persons who are migrant workers, including in an irregular situation, are identified as victims of THB and have access to the rights provided for in the Convention? Is there cooperation with specialised NGOs, trade unions, and employers to enhance the identification and protection of potential victims within these at-risk groups?

Ministry of Interior:

This area is covered by the provisions of the Act on Victims of Crime as well as the Order on the Assistance Programme (for more information on the above-mentioned Order, please refer to questions 4(d), 5(d), 6(a), 6(b), 6(c) as well as question 11 of the questionnaire for more details).

The identification of (potential) victims of THB is carried out by the staff of the relevant entities (i.e. staff of the MO MI SR or members of the Police Force) and/or by the invited partner NGO. The identification uses recommended procedures for interviewing the potential victim and assessing indicators based on international standards. The range of questions to be asked in the identification is defined in Annex 1 of the Order on the Assistance Programme. Methodological aids are used to identify and work with potential victims of THB, etc. (e.g. Methodological aid on the procedure of providing assistance to victims of THB with a special focus on children and foreigners), handbooks developed by Frontex (“Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings”, “VEGA Handbook Children at Airports”, “VEGA Handbook Practical handbook on the detection and disruption of criminal organisations involved in the trafficking of human beings and people smuggling at air borders”), Interpol, etc. Provided that the conditions are met, all identified victims of THB, regardless of the proceedings and the stage of the proceedings, have the possibility to enter the Assistance Programme. The conditions for inclusion in the Assistance Programme are the victim’s breaking off contacts with the criminal environment and the voluntary consent of the potential THB victim to be included in the Assistance Programme. It follows from the above that the SR does not require any formal identification by other state authorities (e.g. law enforcement authorities) before including a victim in the Assistance Programme under this mechanism.

Child victims of THB - foreigners and adult victims of THB who are granted a period of recovery and trafficked persons granted tolerated stay cannot be administratively expelled from the territory of the SR. Under Article 83(8)(a) and (c) of the Act on the Residence of Foreigners, a police department cannot (a) administratively expel a child under the age of 18; this does not apply if the expulsion of the child is in the child’s best interests (c) a third-country national under Article 58(1)(c) (who is a victim of THB if he or she is at least 18 years of age) during the period referred to in Article 58(3) (period for recovery and reflection). However, each trafficked victim may decide whether he/she wishes to voluntarily return to his/her country of origin or last residence or to another third country that will accept him/her.

Article 8 of the Assistance Programme provides that a victim enrolled in the Assistance Programme has the possibility to apply for an assisted voluntary return, which is provided by the service provider (SCC and GCC) on the basis of a written consent of the IC MI SR, to a victim who is a citizen of the SR to the SR, a citizen of the EU or a national of a third country to his/her country of origin or country of last residence.

According to Article 6(1) of the Assistance Programme, reintegration or integration is also provided to the THB victim within the framework of care. According to Article 6(7), reintegration or integration shall be provided after the end of crisis care by the Assistance Programme entity providing the care for a period of 30 days, if justified. The IC MI SR shall extend reintegration or integration for 30 days repeatedly, for a maximum of 90 days, at the request of the care provider. Pursuant to Article 5(6) of the Assistance Programme, the Programme actor providing care shall, immediately after the victim’s

inclusion in the Assistance Programme, draw up a draft individual assistance plan in cooperation with the THB victim and deliver it to the IC MI SR no later than within 7 working days of the date of the THB victim's inclusion in the Assistance Programme. Pursuant to Article 6(6), the programme actor providing care shall update the draft individual assistance plan prior to the reintegration or integration of the THB victim into society and submit it to the IC MI SR for approval. If the trafficked victim decides that he/she wants to return voluntarily to his/her country of origin or last residence, he/she will be removed from the Assistance Programme only after his/her return.

Slovak law does not regulate the return of child victims of THB, and thus the general provisions on the protection and welfare of the child apply to child victims of trafficking. The Act on the SLPCSG and the Code of Civil Procedure provide that any child who finds himself or herself without any care or whose life, health or favourable development is seriously endangered or impaired shall be appointed a guardian by the court. According to the Act on the SLPCSG, measures for the protection of the child are to respect the child's "best interests" as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Measures of the SLPCSG are implemented not only for children, but also for adult natural persons up to 25 years of age (so-called young adults).

All entities implementing measures under the Act on the SLPCSG are obliged to ensure that the rights of the child are not endangered or violated and to provide the child with the protection and care necessary for his or her well-being and the protection of his or her legally protected interests. The Code of Civil Procedure regulates the procedure for the appointment of a guardian. If a minor child finds himself or herself without any care or if his or her life, health or favourable development is seriously endangered or impaired, the court shall order that the minor child be temporarily entrusted to the care of another person (natural or legal). The court shall continuously monitor the manner in which the guardian performs his/her functions. The guardian, both temporary and permanent, must act in the best interests of the child in any procedure concerning the child. If a guardian is appointed for a child victim of THB, the guardian shall participate in all procedures concerning the child, not excluding return to the country of origin.

As regards cooperation with specialised non-governmental organisations, trade unions and employers, in order to improve the identification and protection of potential victims within these risk groups, mention can be made of the existence and functioning of the Expert Group (an advisory, initiating and coordinating body of the National Coordinator for combating THB), which is composed of representatives of the relevant ministries, the Office of the Government of the SR, OGPRC, General Prosecutor's Office, the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia, representatives of civil society, as well as the IOM. The group formed a platform of experts for the preparation of the National Programme for 2024-2028, one of the objectives of which is to increase the early identification of victims of THB.

It is also possible to provide information on the functioning of the multidisciplinary assistance group, which meets regularly, every three months or on an ad hoc basis as needed, and its permanent members are representatives of the IC MI SR, non-governmental organisations - providers of Assistance Programme services and the NUFIM BBFP P PF, or experts from other areas are invited, according to the needs of the application practice.

The following may serve as an example of good practice in the field of cooperation of interested experts: The IC MI SR prepared a two-day workshop for interested experts on 8-9 June 2023 to address THB for the purpose of forced labour vs. poor working conditions and identification of THB victims. The scope of the meeting included the search for possible boundaries between THB for the purpose of forced labour and poor working conditions. Among the participants were representatives of the labour inspectorates, NLI, the CLSAF, the BBFP P PF, the General Prosecutor's Office, the Specialised Criminal Court, as well as service providers under the Assistance Programme (SCC) and the IOM.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

Labour inspectorates are cooperating institutions for the Police Force of the SR. For the past at least five years in a row, labour inspectors have been regularly trained and sensitised on THB. They are methodologically guided in the matter of noticing and detecting identifiers of potential THB, especially labour exploitation. Often, violations of working conditions are detected in a less serious manner than defined by the Criminal Code and employers are administratively punished by labour inspectorates for their violations.

Labour inspection bodies also cooperate with non-governmental organisations. The NLI is a cooperating body and is represented in Slovak and foreign expert working groups such as:

- Task force on trafficking in persons, Tf TIP Protection and Inclusion working group led by the IOM
- Labour Inspection Working Group of IRIS Global Policy Network on Recruitment - an international group established and led by the IOM with secretariat in Switzerland.

Cooperation with the IOM includes training provided by IOM staff to labour inspectorates.

In June 2023, the NLI organised a two-day workshop in Bratislava, focused on the topic of agency employment, employment of foreigners and controls of illegal employment. The event was attended by representatives of labour inspection, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the Social Insurance Agency, CLSAF, BBFP P PF, the Financial Administration of the SR, as well as the European Labour Authority and representatives of associations of agency employers. The workshop was also attended by a representative from the SCC. The meeting included practical information on the employment of foreigners on the territory of the SR, rights and obligations related to the employment of foreigners, as well as various related risks (THB) and the topic of illegal work and illegal employment.

Ministry of Economy:

The question can be addressed in the context of the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market, which is currently being discussed in a Council of the EU working group and for which the Ministry of Economy is the coordinator. The draft regulation is intended to support the fight against forced labour, which is one of the possible consequences of THB. The draft regulation foresees the obligation for the competent authorities, designated by the Member States, to monitor the market and identify the risks of forced labour, inter alia through a database of areas or products at risk of forced labour, created by external experts on the basis of guidelines issued by the Commission, or work in the ICSMS information and communication system.

SCC:

Such victims are identified and referred by the police, the representative office, the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818 or by personal contact. The SCC and GCC, as service providers, will then suggest to the person the possibility of inclusion in the Assistance Programme and instruct him/her accordingly. The victim's voluntary consent is a prerequisite for inclusion in the above-mentioned Assistance Programme. If the person does not agree to enter the Assistance Programme, the service provider shall inform him/her about other assistance options under the Act on Victims of Crime.

The SCC and GCC have also contracted the following services under a contract with the Ministry of Interior for the provision of services: ancillary and complementary services to be provided by the provider are - identification of victims, especially among foreigners in reception, residential and detention camps, through interviews and consultations among potential victims, and the offer of assistance and cooperation through enrolment in the Programme.

21. What measures are in place to encourage victims of THB to report their situation to the authorities and/or civil society organisations?

Ministry of Interior:

On the basis of the service provision contract concluded between the Ministry of Interior and the SCC, the SCC ensures the operation of the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818. The main task of the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818 is to provide help and information in the first contact with persons who have found themselves or could find themselves in such a risky situation. When identifying and assisting in such cases, the Helpline provides contact to organisations providing professional assistance to victims of THB. Helpline services are further aimed at prevention and elimination of risks associated with work abroad, operators warn the callers of the danger of THB. The helpline also serves as a tool to prevent risks associated with labour migration of vulnerable population groups. The Ministry of Interior covers a specialised **Assistance Programme** through the IC MI SR in the role of coordinator. The Assistance Programme is targeted specifically only at victims of THB and thus the services provided are tailored to this group of victims. The basic objectives of the programme are the provision of services in accordance with the protection of human rights and freedoms of victims of THB, through the contracted providers SCC and GCC. Detailed information on the Assistance Programme is provided in the answer to question 3 of the questionnaire.

An important tool in this context is the National Referral Mechanism, which was amended and made publicly available in 2020 by the IC MI SR. The aforementioned national reference framework represents a structure of cooperating entities through which state authorities fulfil their obligations in connection with the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons who have become victims of THB, while coordinating their efforts within the framework of a strategic partnership with civil society. Further information on the National Referral Mechanism is provided in the answer to question 2c) of the questionnaire.

The media campaigns and awareness-raising on THB definitely contribute to the promotion of reporting of cases and suspected cases of THB (more detailed information on the campaigns carried out is provided in the answer to question 4(b) and on education in the answer to question 18 of the questionnaire).

In order to ensure the availability of victim support services, Information Offices are territorially evenly distributed throughout the territory of the SR and are established in public, accessible locations in the premises of the district offices/client centres in each regional city, with a number of 8 offices and in 8 selected district cities identified on the basis of the analysis of risk factors promoting the emergence of criminal behaviour. Services through the Information Offices are available to clients in person or remotely, i.e. by telephone, written letter or e-mail via the general address pomocobetiam@minv.sk, as well as through the regional contacts of the individual staff members. The services are available to the client even if he/she wishes to remain anonymous, as no verification of the client's identity is required in order to obtain the service. The services are also available in the Ukrainian language through the implemented contractual cooperation with informal interpreters from the ranks of university students. Access to information is also ensured through publicly available awareness-raising materials, which aim to inform the public about risks in the context of particular crime prevention topics (e.g. /online/ fraud, domestic violence, THB, hate speech, etc.), to provide preventive advice and recommendations on how not to become a victim, and to inform about the available options and contacts for help and support. The awareness-raising materials have been distributed in print throughout the SR and are also available online on the website of the Ministry of Interior at the following link <https://www.minv.sk/?brozury-a-letaky>. An up-to-date overview, contacts and opening hours of the Information Offices are available on the website of the Ministry of Interior.

SCC:

For the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818, information is provided in response to question 1. Other measures put in place also include training of social workers of charities and first contact field workers who have access to vulnerable members of society, training of staff and volunteers of Malteser Aid Slovakia.

Ministry of Justice:

The Ministry of Justice provides relevant information through its website, information materials and accredited bodies pursuant to the Act on Victims of Crime (see the answer to question 6(b) for more information on accredited bodies). Information is provided to victims of crime concerning their basic rights, information on the course of criminal proceedings, the possibility of compensation or contacts to assistance bodies, Information Offices or Legal Aid Centres.

22. What specific measures are taken in your country to detect/identify and refer to assistance possible victims of THB at the borders? What measures are taken in your country to identify victims of THB during the examination of asylum applications and prior to the return of persons whose applications are rejected?

Ministry of Interior:

Important legislation in this area is the Act on Protection of Victims of Crime and the Order on the Assistance Programme.

Officers of the Border and Foreign Police of the BBFP P PF who carry out their duties at border crossing points, asylum centres and police detention units for foreigners are trained to identify potential victims of THB at the border and among foreigners. In case of knowledge or suspicion of THB, officers of the NUFIM BBFP P PF are immediately notified, who examine the case and inform the potential THB victim about the possibilities of assistance, including the Assistance Programme.

To facilitate the identification of persons (potential victims of THB), profiles or question circles are used. The range of questions to be asked in the identification is defined in Annex 1 of the Order on the Assistance Programme. Methodological aids are used to identify and work with potential victims of THB, etc. (e.g. Methodological aid on the procedure of providing assistance to victims of THB with a special focus on children and foreigners), handbooks developed by Frontex (“Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings”, “VEGA Handbook Children at Airports”, “VEGA Handbook Practical handbook on the detection and disruption of criminal organisations involved in the trafficking of human beings and people smuggling at air borders”), Interpol, etc. Police officers assigned to the border control units of the Police Force are continuously retrained in this area. In cases of victims of THB, each third-country national is subjected to a thorough profiling, the purpose of which is, among other things, to determine the purpose of the journey. Particular attention is paid to travellers who are travelling with minor children, as this category is among the most vulnerable and at risk. When irregular migrants are apprehended at the green border, they are questioned individually in the presence of an interpreter, and attention is also paid to the possibility of identifying victims of THB. In the identification of potential victims, we cooperate with international organisations, in particular the IOM, which is intensively engaged in activities in this area.

The measures taken by the MO MI SR to identify THB were mentioned in the answer to question 6(a). As the measures to identify a victim of THB are already in place from the very beginning of the asylum procedure, they are the same in the initial stages of the procedure as they are during the whole procedure.

The Contingency Plan was adopted by Government Resolution of the SR No. 665/2022 of 26 October 2022. On the basis of the cooperation, the issue of THB was also incorporated in the above mentioned Contingency Plan. One of the strategic objectives of the Contingency Plan is also to give increased attention and protection to persons with specific needs, in particular UMs, persons with disabilities and women who are victims of THB and/or sexual and gender-based violence. By Government Resolution of the SR No. 346/2023 of 23 June 2023, the Contingency Plan was updated and the current document is valid until the end of December 2023.

For the needs of work and procedure with the client at the Information Offices, a procedural memory map “foreigner” was developed in cooperation with the MO MI SR and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

Certainly, the implemented media campaigns and awareness raising on the issue of THB by the IC MI SR and other departments of the Ministry of Interior contribute to the promotion of possible identification of victims of THB (more detailed information on the implemented campaigns is provided in the answer to question 4(b)) and on the education of the professional public and professional groups in the framework of the answer to question 18 of the questionnaire). As part of the lectures conducted, a number of promotional materials on THB issues were distributed to the participants, containing information on the possibilities of assistance and shared preventive good advice and warnings or useful information before travelling abroad.

In February 2023, a workshop and discussion on measures taken in Slovakia to prevent and avoid THB in relation to refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine was organised by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe in cooperation with the IC MI SR. That workshop, which featured presentations from key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, provided a platform to reflect on the risks and vulnerabilities of refugees, highlighted positive practices and identified urgent needs. A number of positive practices emerged from the discussions, including the widespread sharing of information on assistance and services available to refugees, both offline and online, the sharing of specific information on housing, the availability of psychological support for refugees provided by professionals resettled directly from Ukraine, and the significant efforts made to prevent THB since the beginning of the conflict, including through the distribution of information materials and the provision of training to frontline stakeholders on the signs and indicators of THB; the availability of unconditional assistance for victims of THB, with a view to ensuring their safety and reintegration into society.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

The CLSAF pays special attention to the processes of identification, prevention, assistance and protection of victims of THB, detailed information is provided in the answer to question 4(b).

SCC:

Immediately after the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, in February 2022, a personal presence of SCC staff was ensured at three border crossings in eastern Slovakia. The charity’s main activities at the borders consisted of personal contact with refugees, distribution of materials with preventive information on the risks of THB, access to protection and comprehensive assistance for victims of THB, providing professional support to volunteers from cooperating organisations operating at the border at the time, providing information about the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818, operated in Ukrainian language 24/7, cooperation with the NUFIM BBFP P PF and proactive submission, verification and notification of verified complaints.

23. What measures are taken in your country to identify victims of THB in immigration detection centres and prisons?

Ministry of Interior:

In relation to this question, we draw attention to the National Referral Mechanism, for more details see the answer to question 2(c), and the Order on the Assistance Programme, for more details see the answer to question 3 of the questionnaire. During the period under review, the IC MI SR carried out training for the staff of reception camps and the staff of the MO MI SR, while the participants were also trained on the VITA programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which contains questions facilitating the identification of a person as a potential victim of THB in all languages (both written and verbal), for the purpose of initial communication pending the arrival of an interpreter. CDs with the programme in question were distributed for further service use.

As part of the process of identifying a (potential) victim of THB, a police officer of the Police Detention Centre for Foreigners (hereinafter referred to as the “PDCF”), when identifying a potential victim, asks the foreigner a series of obligatory questions during the writing of the report in order to ascertain whether he/she is a victim of THB. The range of questions to be asked in the identification is defined in Annex 1 of the Order on the Assistance Programme. If necessary, the police officer may also ask further supplementary questions to clarify the answers. Also, the foreigner himself/herself may testify about facts indicating THB or, when identifying a (potential) victim of THB, it is also possible to use the IOM brochure, which the PDCF police officer will present to the foreigner for consultation and according to which the foreigner can identify himself/herself as a victim on the basis of the questions in several foreign languages listed therein.

In case the PDCF police officer, after having asked the foreigner questions, finds that there is a reasonable suspicion that the foreigner may be a potential victim of THB, he/she is obliged to immediately contact one of the cooperating non-governmental organisations (SCC, GCC) by telephone and inform their staff of the facts he/she has found out. The identified THB victim who is placed in the facility shall be informed about the possibilities of granting tolerated stay and the conditions for inclusion in the Assistance Programme. The police officer of the PDCF contacts the competent police department responsible for granting the tolerated stay and one of the cooperating non-governmental organisations, which carry out further actions related to the granting of tolerated stay (if applicable) and inclusion in the Assistance Programme.

A staff member of the cooperating non-governmental organisation will conduct a detailed identification interview and assess the THB indicators. In the SR, the need to complement this identification process with additional mechanisms has not yet arisen. If the staff member of the cooperating non-governmental organisation confirms that the foreigner is indeed a victim of THB and that the foreigner meets the conditions for admission to care, the police officer of the facility will hand over the foreigner to a representative of the non-governmental organisation. The partner non-governmental organisation shall further carry out the acts related to the inclusion of the victim in the Assistance Programme.

The SR has in place an institutional and coordination structure for cooperation between the state and non-state actors involved, with the aim of suppressing THB and protecting and assisting victims of this crime. This structure, together with the Assistance Programme, constitutes the SR’s National Referral Mechanism in the fight against THB.

As far as asylum seekers are concerned, the identification of potential victims of THB is ensured in the institutions of the MO MI SR, mainly by the decision-makers who carry out the asylum procedure itself and by the social workers who work in these institutions. In 2021, all staff of the MO MI SR assessing the actual applications for international protection and the staff of the first contact with asylum seekers received training on the identification of potential victims of THB, which was organised in cooperation with the IC MI SR. This training was also made available to other staff of the MO MI SR, including asylum facilities, who come into contact with applicants. It was a set of 7 trainings carried out in smaller groups in Bratislava and Košice, attended by a total of 50 employees

of the MO MI SR. The retraining of selected staff of the Department on the training modules of the EU Agency for Asylum, one of which is directly focused on THB, can be considered as a great contribution to further improving the decision-making activities of the Procedural Department. At the same time, emphasis is also placed on self-identification of the person as a victim or potential victim of THB, both by instructing each applicant in a language he/she understands about the risks of THB, which also includes questions for self-identification of the victim, and by means of leaflets on THB, which are freely available in several languages in all facilities of the MO MI SR.

Secondary and complementary services to be provided by the SCC and the GCC under the contract concluded with the Ministry of Interior are - identification of victims, especially among foreigners in reception and residence camps, through interviews and consultations among potential victims of THB, and offering assistance and cooperation through inclusion in the Assistance Programme.

Ministry of Justice:

The Prison and Judicial Guard Corps do not have specific measures in place to identify victims of THB. In general, however, it can be stated that if, in the course of their duties, prison staff become aware of information indicating that a person suspected of being a victim of THB is present within the facilities of the Prison and Judicial Guard Corps, such knowledge would be referred to the relevant services for further evaluation in accordance with the inter-ministerial agreements.

24. What services are available in your country to provide specific assistance to particularly vulnerable victims, such as:

- a. persons with disabilities;
- b. LGBTI+ persons;
- c. victims with children;
- d. victims with severe mental and physical trauma;
- e. homeless persons;
- f. other.

Ministry of Justice:

In accordance with the Act on Victims of Crime, particularly vulnerable victim means a child, a person over 75 years of age, a person with a disability, a victim of a THB offence, an offence of involuntary disappearance, an offence of cruelty to a person close to or entrusted to the person, an offence committed by an organised group, an offence against human dignity, an offence of terrorism or an offence of domestic violence, a victim of a crime committed by violence or threat of violence on account of his or her gender, sexual orientation, nationality, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, a victim of any other crime who is at a higher risk of repeated victimisation or secondary victimisation, as determined on the basis of an individual assessment of the victim and his or her personal characteristics, relationship to the perpetrator or dependence on the perpetrator, the type or nature and circumstances of the offence committed.

Every victim has the right to professional assistance. This professional assistance is provided in particular by accredited entities, as well as by other entities providing assistance to victims.

Specialised professional assistance for a particularly vulnerable victim includes:

- the provision of general specialised assistance,
- the provision of crisis psychological intervention,
- an assessment of the threat of danger to life or health,
- arranging for the provision of social services in an emergency housing facility and specialised social counselling if the life or health of a particularly vulnerable victim is in imminent danger.

The victim has the right to receive professional assistance in accordance with his/her specific needs and to an extent proportionate to the harm caused by the offence. The right to professional assistance is guaranteed to the victim irrespective of the filing of a criminal complaint or his/her active participation in the criminal proceedings. The provisions on assistance also apply mutatis mutandis to a member of the victim's family in accordance with the victim's special needs and the extent of the harm caused by the offence committed against the victim.

Particularly vulnerable victims are always entitled to receive specialised professional assistance free of charge. This assistance is provided for a period of 90 days and, if necessary and requested by the victim (including informally, e.g. by arranging a follow-up meeting), for longer.

Ministry of Interior:

The term "particularly vulnerable victim" is defined by Article 2(1)(c) of the Act on Victims of Crime. Under the provisions of this Act, specialised professional assistance is provided to a particularly vulnerable victim. In accordance with Article 3(2) of the Act, **the rights granted to the victim by this Act are applied without discrimination based on sex, religion or belief, race, nationality or ethnic group, health condition, age, sexual orientation, marital status, skin colour, language, political or other mentality, national or social origin, property or other position.**

Within the coordination of the Ministry of Interior, this is addressed by the provision of an Assistance Programme implemented by contracted non-governmental organisations (currently the SCC and GCC) on the basis of public procurement. The Assistance Programme is regulated in the internal regulation on the Assistance Programme. The services of the Assistance Programme include:

- (a) isolation from the criminal environment,
- (b) the possibility of suitable and safe accommodation,
- (c) assistance to the Slovak citizen in assisted voluntary return to the Slovak Republic
- (d) assistance to an EU citizen or third-country national in assisted voluntary return to the country of origin and facilitating the assistance of an organisation operating in the country of origin,
- (e) social assistance,
- (f) social counselling,
- (g) psychological counselling,
- (h) psychotherapeutic services,
- (i) interpretation and translation services,
- (j) legal advice,
- (k) healthcare,
- (l) retraining courses,
- (m) the possibility of being included in a witness protection programme under a special regulation
- (n) the possibility of one-off financial compensation under a special regulation.

The service provider of the Assistance Programme shall take into account with special consideration a person with special needs whose needs are related in particular to the fact that she is pregnant, to his or her medical condition, to a disability, to a mental or psychological disorder, or to a serious form of psychological, physical or sexual violence suffered by him or her. The provision of professional assistance and support to victims of THB is based on a victim-centred approach - determined by the specific (special) needs, taking into account the capacity, voice, experience, requirements and best interests of the individual victim. In practice, it is applied e.g. in the development of an individual assistance plan in collaboration and with the consent of the victim. The individual assistance plan is regularly updated and its implementation is subject to the control of the coordinator of the Assistance Programme, the IC MI SR.

The services of the Information Offices are intended for victims of crime (including particularly vulnerable victims) and antisocial activities. The role of the Information Offices is to provide victims with basic information, inter alia, on the form and scope of professional assistance, which is also provided to particularly vulnerable victims in the form of specialised professional assistance provided through accredited victim assistance bodies, including information that it is provided to them free of charge. Where a need is identified, the role of the Information Offices is to intermediate professional assistance to victims.

25. How do you support the (re)integration of victims of THB? What processes are in place in your country to provide assistance to victims of THB exploited abroad after their return?

Ministry of Interior:

The Ministry of Interior has contracted service providers under the Assistance Programme for THB victims, which are the SCC and GCC, based on the outcome of the public procurement process. The services provided include, among others, reintegration/reintegration and pre-return assistance to THB victims.

SCC:

In order to ensure a safe return from the country of exploitation, pre-return assistance and assisted voluntary return are provided to the victim. Upon return, the victim is provided with crisis care and reintegration. The purpose of crisis care is to eliminate the risk of a destructive way of dealing with the situation and to assist in recovery by providing the basic necessities of life and healthcare. In the framework of reintegration, individual assistance services are provided in accordance with the Assistance Programme on the basis of an individual assistance plan. The Assistance Programme is a quality instrument that allows for the provision of comprehensive assistance taking into account the specific needs of victims of THB. Practice confirms that the experience of slavery without assistance leads to the street. The Assistance Programme is set up in a way that allows the victim to regain dignity in all areas of life. It is also noteworthy that this Assistance Programme has served as a model in setting up a system for the provision of general and special care to victims of crime under the Act on Victims of Crime. The biggest benefits of the Assistance Programme include:

- providing comprehensive assistance to potential victims over a six-month period without the need to cooperate with law enforcement authorities
- providing assistance to a victim who cooperates with law enforcement authorities for the duration of the criminal proceedings for the crime of THB
- access to full healthcare, regardless of debts, which are not taken into account during the period of inclusion in the Assistance Programme
- free legal aid throughout the period of inclusion in the Assistance Programme
- assistance to victims after the criminal proceedings have ended, even several years after leaving the Assistance Programme (currently 10 such clients).

26. If there is a provision in your country's law that provides for the possibility of issuing a residence permit owing to the victim's personal situation, how is this interpreted in practice? Please provide examples.

Ministry of Interior:

Residence permits for victims of THB - in accordance with Council Directive 2004/81/EC on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings

or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities, the SR has, since 1 January 2007, granted third-country nationals who are victims of THB and who are staying illegally on the territory of the SR so-called tolerated stay. Since 2007, the conditions and procedures for granting this stay to trafficked persons have been changed in individual provisions by amending the Act on the Residence of Foreigners and currently the granting of tolerated stay is governed by the relevant provisions of the Act on the Residence of Foreigners. According to the provisions of this Act currently in force, the police department or a person authorised by the Ministry of Interior shall inform the third-country national who is a victim of THB and is at least 18 years old about the possibility and conditions of granting tolerated stay on this ground and about the rights and obligations arising therefrom. A third-country national who is a victim of THB is granted tolerated stay for a maximum of 90 days directly by law. During this period - the reflection period - the third-country national has to decide whether to cooperate with the law enforcement authorities in the investigation of the THB crime. This period may be extended by 30 days at the request of the person in charge of the Ministry of Interior. The granting of tolerated stay during this period is not conditional on cooperation with the police. The victim is also entitled to access services and assistance under the Assistance Programme during this period. Further granting/extension of tolerated stay (after the reflection period) is conditional on the victim's decision to cooperate with law enforcement authorities. The application for the grant/extension of tolerated stay is submitted by the law enforcement authority on behalf of the third-country national. The police department shall grant such tolerated stay for at least 180 days, including repeatedly, if the presence of the third-country national on the territory of the SR is necessary for the purposes of criminal proceedings. However, if it is proved that the applicant has not broken off or resumed contacts with persons suspected of committing the THB offence of his/her own volition, the police department will not grant tolerated stay. The police department shall decide on the application for granting tolerated stay or on the application for extension of tolerated stay within 15 days of the submission of the application to the police department. The SR does not grant to third-country nationals a type of residence other than the aforementioned type of residence specifically intended for victims of THB. Upon fulfilment of the conditions laid down by law, the legislation of the SR allows third-country nationals who are victims of THB and have been granted tolerated stay to apply for another type of residence on the territory of the SR (temporary or permanent). Once they have been granted another type of residence, their tolerated stay will expire.

Example of good practice

In order to be considered as THB, three characteristics must be met.

- 1. The conduct** consists in - the recruitment/offering/ enticement, transportation, transfer, possession, hand-over and take-over of the person by the trafficker.
- 2. Use of means** – fraudulent conduct, deception, deprivation of liberty, kidnapping, violence, threat of violence, threat of other serious harm or other forms of coercion, the acceptance or provision of a pecuniary benefit or other advantage to obtain the consent of a person on whom another person is dependent, or the abuse of one's position or the abuse of one's defencelessness or otherwise vulnerable position.
- 3. Purpose of exploitation** – prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, including pornography, forced labour/service, forced begging, slavery/slavery-like practices, bondage, forced marriage, exploitation for criminal purposes, removal of organs, tissues or cells, or other forms of exploitation. Victims who are trafficked experience an initial shock when they arrive at their place of work, where they either do not do what they were promised or work in disastrous conditions, being forced to work under the threat of physical violence, coercion, duress or psychological terror. They cannot leave the working environment voluntarily and their stay and movement are controlled, often being closed and locked up. They do not receive the money they have worked for, or only a small part of it is paid to them. They cannot communicate with other victims or with their family. In most

cases, their identification documents are also taken away. Traffickers create a fiction of debt for the victims, whether for the travel and accommodation costs provided, contractual penalties for not carrying out the work to their liking or for the amount for which they were bought. The victim is unable to recover from his/her debt. In this way, they may be sold by the traffickers several times and abused for months or years.

Situation in the SR

Slovakia is mainly referred to as a source and transit country rather than a destination country, although the possibility of a destination country is not completely excluded either. The main countries to which Slovak nationals are trafficked are the Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Italy and the UK. Victims in transit come mainly from Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Romania, Bulgaria or India.

In Slovakia, there is also a relatively wide representation of domestic THB, with the most frequent destinations being Košice, Bratislava, Humenné, Lučenec, Komárno and Kežmarok. The most frequently used means of transport vary depending on whether the victim is transported by the perpetrator - then the most frequent means of transport is a private car, or travels alone by bus, train, plane, etc.

For this reason, the Ministry of Interior has produced a brochure “It can’t happen to me” which provides information on the main reasons for THB, how to protect yourself, what to look out for, how THB works, real victims’ stories, who to contact and a range of other useful information.

27. What measures are in place to ensure that the identity, or details allowing the identification, of a child victim of trafficking are not made publicly known?

Ministry of Justice:

Pursuant to Article 2(21) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, law enforcement authorities and the court are obliged to allow the victim to fully exercise his or her rights throughout the criminal proceedings, about which he or she must be duly, appropriately and comprehensibly informed. Criminal proceedings must be conducted with the necessary consideration for the victim and the victim’s family members as provided for by a special act. The victim’s personal situation and immediate needs, age, sex, possible disability and maturity must be taken into account, while fully respecting his or her physical, mental and moral integrity. The provisions of the special act on the rights of victims of crime are not affected thereby.

The provision of information on criminal proceedings is provided for in Article 6(2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure. When providing information, law enforcement authorities and the court are entitled to conceal those facts which could obstruct or hinder the clarification and investigation of the case. In doing so, they shall be obliged to respect the principle of the presumption of innocence. They shall also ensure that they do not disclose protected personal data or facts of a private nature, in particular family life, home and correspondence, which are not directly related to the criminal offence. They shall take particular care to protect the interests of minors, juveniles and victims, whose personal data shall not be disclosed. The publication of court decisions and the categories of data to be excluded from court decisions before publication are regulated by Ministry of Justice Decree No. 482/2011 Coll.

The protection of the identity or data of child victims is further ensured through the provisions of the Act on Victims of Crime, which regulates the rights, protection and support of victims of crime, as well as the relations between the state and entities providing assistance to victims. According to the law, law enforcement authorities, courts and entities providing assistance to victims are obliged to take into account the best interests of the child in the case of a particularly vulnerable victim, who is a child. Victims have the right to protection from secondary victimisation, which is defined as harm caused as a result of the acts, attitudes or omissions of an exhaustively defined range of actors, including the mass media. Although the law does not introduce sanctions for

breach of obligations, breach of obligations by public authorities may give rise to a right to damages for maladministration by public authorities. Similarly, actions of public authorities that violate statutory obligations may give rise to criminal liability if the substantive elements of criminal offences are fulfilled. It should also be taken into account that breaches of duty by entities providing assistance to victims may lead to revocation of accreditation. All of the above mechanisms are of a punitive nature. **In addition, the law establishes the obligation of law enforcement authorities and courts to provide victims with a full opportunity to exercise their rights, which includes cooperation with entities providing assistance to victims. It defines the status of the victim in criminal proceedings and also establishes the obligation to always take into account the best interests of the child.**

Ministry of Interior:

Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA ensures the protection of personal data of individuals involved in criminal proceedings, whether as witnesses, victims or suspects. It establishes a comprehensive framework to ensure a high level of data protection while taking into account the specific nature of the work of police and law enforcement authorities. It contributes to increasing trust and facilitating cooperation in the fight against crime in Europe by harmonising the protection of personal data by law enforcement authorities in EU Member States and Schengen countries. Together with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, it is part of the reform of the EU data protection rules. At the same time, the identification of the identity of child victims of THB by the public is prevented by the fact that the preliminary and pre-trial criminal proceedings are not public, i.e. the issued resolutions are not available to the public. In addition to the above, the identification details of child victims are recorded in such a way that it is not possible to identify them from the document, i.e. only the initials of the first name and surname are given, together with the date of birth of the child victim of THB.

The information which the employees of Information Offices have become familiar with from the documents and data from the clients is subject to the obligation of confidentiality towards other (third) parties within the meaning of the provisions of Article 111(1) of Act No 55/2017 Coll. on the civil service and on the amendment to certain acts. However, the obligation of confidentiality does not apply to the notification of crime or other anti-social activity or to the notification of a threat to the interests of a child. Pursuant to the provision of Article 3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, Information Offices are obliged to provide assistance to law enforcement authorities in the performance of their tasks related to criminal proceedings, to notify law enforcement authorities without delay of facts indicating that a crime has been committed, and to deal with requests from law enforcement authorities and courts in a timely manner, unless classified information, trade secrets, banking secrets, tax secrets, postal secrets, and telecommunication secrets are involved. Pursuant to Article 7 of Act No.305/2005 Coll. on the SLPCSG and on the amendment to certain acts, the staff of Information Offices are obliged to notify the SLPCSG authority of a violation of a child's rights.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family:

The protection of personal data within the scope of SLPCSG authorities is ensured in accordance with the GDPR. Data on children are recorded in the information systems of the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and are not accessible to third parties. Other actors involved in

resolving the child's situation, i.e. police, healthcare providers, school, educational facilities, receive information, but only to the extent necessary to ensure the rights of the child (e.g. access to healthcare, access to education). Personal data are covered by Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation). Personal data will be kept for the duration of the purpose and archived for the period required and specified in the relevant legal regulations and according to the general limitation periods. The SLPCSG authority may not process the personal data collected for any purpose other than that for which they were collected. Information on personal data protection is published at https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/pd/ochrana-osobnych-udajov.html?page_id=800196.

28. What measures are in place aimed at encouraging the media to protect the private life and identity of victims?

Ministry of Culture:

Act No. 264/2022 Coll. on media services and on the amendment to certain acts (hereinafter referred to as the "Media Services Act") provides in Article 15(1) that the content service provider shall be responsible for the content of the content service provided by it, unless paragraphs 2 to 4 or a special regulation provide otherwise; the content service provider pursuant to Article 13(1)(c) and (d) and (2) shall be responsible for its content only to the extent of its obligations pursuant to this Act and pursuant to a special regulation.

Pursuant to Article 48(1)(a) and (c) Point 1 of the Media Services Act, the provider of a video sharing platform is obliged to take appropriate measures for the protection of:

(a) minors from programmes, user-generated videos and commercial media communications that may impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors in accordance with the conditions set out in Article 62(1),

(b) the public from programmes, user-generated videos and commercial media communications which contain the promotion of violence or which openly or covertly incite violence or hatred, disparage or denigrate on the grounds of sex, race, colour, language, faith and religion, political or other opinion, property, disability, age, sexual orientation, birth, national or social origin, genetic characteristics, nationality, membership of a nationality or ethnic group,

(c) the public from programmes, user-generated videos and commercial media communications that:
1. contain the elements of the offence of dissemination of child pornography.

Pursuant to Article 49(1)(c), (d) and (f) of the Media Services Act, measures under Article 48 may include, depending on the specific case

(c) the establishment and operation of a transparent and user-friendly mechanism through which users will be able to report or flag content referred to in Article 48(1) that is provided on a video sharing platform,

(d) the establishment and operation of a system informing users of the effect of their reporting or flagging of content under point (c),

(f) the establishment and operation of a transparent, user-friendly and efficient procedure for handling and resolving user complaints regarding the implementation of the measures referred to in points (c) to (e), (h) and (i).

According to Article 61(1)(d), the content service provided by a broadcaster or a provider of an on-demand audiovisual media service must respect human dignity, in particular it must not gratuitously depict scenes of real violence which unduly emphasise the actual course of dying or depict persons subjected to physical or psychological suffering, with particular regard to victims of crime or their relatives, in a way which is considered to be an unjustified interference with human dignity.

With effect from 1 August 2022, the Media Services Act and Act No. 265/2022 Coll. on publishers of publications and on the register in the field of media and audiovision and on the amendment to certain acts have brought about an effort to ensure greater transparency and information on media ownership, through a media register which will contain data on the owners of media under the jurisdiction of the Slovak authorities, including the beneficial owner. This will allow persons whose privacy has been unlawfully invaded to easily and quickly identify the person responsible for the content of the media in question, against whom they can defend themselves by appropriate legal means.

Both the Media Services Act and Act No. 265/2022 Coll. on publishers of publications and on the register in the field of media and audiovision and on the amendment to certain acts also regulate the protection of the source of information whose identity is to remain confidential, whereby the content service provider, the publisher of a periodical publication, the operator of a news web portal, a news agency and other persons who have been involved in obtaining or processing information from a source are obliged to maintain confidentiality of the source of the information obtained in the course of their activities and of the content of that information so that the identity of the person who provided the information cannot be ascertained. Reflecting recent developments in the digital field, source protection also applies to location data or other data on the whereabouts or movements, remote repositories, etc. of persons maintaining confidentiality. The only exception to source protection is in the case of the prevention of a crime, where the public interest in preventing crime quite clearly outweighs the interest in protecting the source. Thus, if a victim of a THB crime chooses to provide certain information to the media, his or her identity is protected by law.

29. Have there been cases of diplomatic households (of your country's diplomats abroad and of foreign diplomats in your country) employing domestic staff in conditions which could be forced labour or human trafficking? If yes, how was the issue of diplomatic immunity addressed? How were the victims identified, assisted and protected?

Ministry of Interior:

The NUFIM BBFP P PF has not yet reviewed or investigated any THB case where the place of exploitation of the victims (domestic staff) would be a diplomatic household.

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs:

With regard to the question, it can be noted that there has been no case of Slovak diplomats abroad, nor of foreign diplomats accredited and based in the territory of the Slovak Republic, which would show signs of employment of domestic staff under conditions that could constitute forced labour or THB.

30. What specific steps are taken in your country to identify victims of THB amongst persons recruited and exploited by terrorist/armed groups?

Ministry of Interior:

The Counter-Terrorism Centre of the National Crime Agency of the Presidium of the Police Force is the coordinator of the fight against terrorism in the conditions of the Ministry of Interior. The Police Force carries out rigorous detection and investigation of terrorism offences, in the framework of which, in the event of a real situation, it examines the possibility of THB by terrorist groups. Cases of recent years indicate the prevalence of self-radicalised individuals who were not part of wider organised terrorist structures and whose actions were influenced by violent right-wing ideologies. At

present, we have no information on THB victims from among individuals recruited and exploited by terrorist groups in the territory of the SR.

Similar acts occur more frequently abroad, for example in the context of the ideology of violent Islam, which is, however, only a marginal issue in the SR.

31. Are there requirements in your country's legal framework for the detection and removal of THB-related Internet content, and what are the sanctions for non-compliance? Is there a code of conduct for providers? If a person is detected as a presumed victim of THB in the process, how is this person referred to assistance?

Ministry of Culture:

Currently, Act No.264/2022 Coll. on media services regulates the procedure for preventing the dissemination of illegal content (Articles 152 and 153), with illegal content defined in Article 151(2) of this Act. The term "illegal content" does not include THB, but it does include content that fulfils the characteristics of child pornography.

In November 2022, Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act) entered into force and will apply from 17 February 2024. The Digital Services Act is a new pan-European regulation of online content that introduces new harmonised rules for intermediary service providers, including social networks, online marketplaces, internet search engines, web hosting and cloud services, online travel and accommodation platforms, app stores and other types of online platforms. Third country providers will also be subject to regulation if they provide their services to users in the EU. The Digital Services Act aims to contribute to building a safer and more transparent online environment, improving the conditions for the provision of cross-border intermediary services, improving the position of consumers and strengthening the protection of users' fundamental rights in the online space. The Digital Services Act contains targeted measures to fight more effectively against illegal content distributed through online intermediary services and new obligations for providers of these services, diversified according to the size and type of provider. The proposed pan-European oversight structure, to be based on intensive cooperation between digital service coordinators and the European Commission, should ensure a safe, predictable and trustworthy online environment. Under the Regulation, EU Member States have until 17 February 2024 to designate a National Digital Services Coordinator who will be responsible for all matters relating to the supervision and enforcement of the Regulation.

The Digital Services Act provides opportunities to take action against illegal content published online. The definition of illegal content in this Regulation ('illegal content' means any information that, in itself or in relation to an activity, including the sale of products or the provision of services, is not in compliance with Union law or the law of any Member State which is in compliance with Union law, irrespective of the precise subject matter or nature of that law) and the philosophy of the Regulation, according to which the notion of illegal content should broadly reflect the existing rules in the offline environment, lead to the conclusion that THB - related content will also be considered as illegal content.

The Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, is currently preparing an amendment to Act No.264/2022 Coll. on media services and other related regulations, the subject of which is to ensure the enforceability of rights and obligations arising from the Digital Services Act. It plans to submit the amendment to the Act to the inter-ministerial comment procedure in September 2023.

Ministry of Interior:

If, during the process, a person is found to be a presumed victim of THB, the referral for assistance is analogous to that outlined in the response to question 21 of the questionnaire.

III. INVESTIGATION, PROSECUTION, SANCTIONS AND MEASURES (Articles 4, 18, 19, 23, 24, 27, 28 and 30)

32. Is the abuse of a position of vulnerability part of the human trafficking offence in your country's law? How are the concepts of "vulnerability" and "abuse of a position of vulnerability" defined in law? Have they been subject to judicial interpretation? If yes, please provide relevant case-law.

Ministry of Interior:

Based on Article 2(2) of 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 - a position of vulnerability means a situation in which the person concerned has no real or acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved.

Ministry of Justice:

The Act on Victims of Crime defines in Article 2(1)(c) the term "particularly vulnerable victim", which means a child, a person over 75 years of age, a person with a disability, a victim of a THB offence, an offence of involuntary disappearance, an offence of cruelty to a person close to or entrusted to the person, an offence committed by an organised group, an offence against human dignity, an offence of terrorism or an offence of domestic violence, a victim of a crime committed by violence or threat of violence on account of his or her gender, sexual orientation, nationality, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, a victim of any other crime who is at a higher risk of repeated victimisation or secondary victimisation, as determined on the basis of an individual assessment of the victim and his or her personal characteristics, relationship to the perpetrator or dependence on the perpetrator, the type or nature and circumstances of the offence committed. Following the provision of this article, the Code of Criminal Procedure in Article 134 provides for a special procedure for carrying out procedural acts with such persons, who are defined as particularly vulnerable victims.

The answer to the question posed is yes, abuse of a position of vulnerability is part of the definition of the offence of THB under Article 179 of the Criminal Code. Abuse of a position of vulnerability does not result in the application of a higher penalty rate, since it is a basic element of the offence and for that reason it cannot be a qualified element of the offence at the same time and, even if it were, it would not be possible to apply the same element of the offence twice (it would be fulfilled only once, within the basic element of the offence). The element of a vulnerable position for the purposes of the qualification of the offence is not defined by the Criminal Code. As far as the case law of the courts is concerned, we have not been able to find a decision that specifies this feature in more detail.

Article 179(1) of the Criminal Code defining the crime of THB:

Any person who, by using fraudulent practices, a trick, restriction of personal freedom, kidnapping, violence, threatened violence, threat of grievous bodily harm or other forms of coercion, by accepting or offering monetary payment or other benefits in order to get approval of a person on whom another person depends, or by misusing his powers, **or abusing of defencelessness or other vulnerable position**, entices, transports, harbours, hands over or takes over another person, even upon his/her consent, for the purposes of his/her prostitution or another form of sexual exploitation, including pornography, forced labour or forced service including begging, slavery or practices similar to slavery, bondage, forced marriage, abuse to commit criminal activity, for taking of organs, tissues or cells or other forms of exploitation, shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of four to ten years.

33. Is the special vulnerability of the victim considered as an aggravating factor for the offender's sentence?

Ministry of Justice:

Same as in response to question 32.

Ministry of Interior:

The special vulnerability of the victim is not considered an aggravating factor for the offender's sentence. In the case of the offence of THB, the legislator already allows, in the basic facts of the offence, to impose on the perpetrator a prison sentence of between four and ten years, which is a relatively high penalty and, to the knowledge of the NUFIM BBFP P PF, such a penalty is one of the highest in comparison with the penalties for this type of criminal activity under the laws regulated by the other European states. Article 37 of the Criminal Code provides for a wide range of facts which are considered as aggravating circumstances and which may be taken into account by the judge when deciding on the level of sentence, but special vulnerability is not one of these facts.

34. According to national case-law, what forms of vulnerability are mostly abused by offenders in human trafficking cases? Please provide specific examples that show how the concept of "abuse of a position of vulnerability" is used in practice. What are the challenges in its application? Is it sufficient to prove the existence of a position of vulnerability of the victim, or must it also be proven that the defendant knew or should have known of the victim's vulnerability, and intentionally manipulated the victim on this basis?

Ministry of Justice:

An analysis of court decisions concerning THB shows that the most frequent forms of vulnerability include, in particular, adverse social, economic and family situation, health disadvantage, homelessness, the environment of MRC - concentrated, generationally reproduced poverty, as well as abuse of a close relationship with the victim.

In one decision, the vulnerable position of the victim, who was a demonstrably elderly amputee in a wheelchair and homeless at the time of the enticement, was exploited. Further, e.g. abuse of the victim's mental disorder or abuse of the defencelessness of a hearing impaired person.

Examples:

- "MRC, he lived in concentrated, generationally reproduced poverty";
- "he abused the defencelessness of a hearing impaired person";
- "he knew they were poor, inexperienced, in distress and living in poor social conditions".

Ministry of Interior:

The perpetrators of THB exploit in particular the age of the victim and the associated vulnerability of the victims, the victim's subordination, inexperience and often dependence on the perpetrator, the victim's low social status associated with the lack of financial resources necessary to provide for the necessities of life and the low intelligence level of the victim, which makes the victims more easily influenced. A concrete example could be the following: perpetrators often lure their victims with the prospect of securing lucrative and well-paid work, but they do not pay the wages for the work they have done, but keep the wages and thus parasitise on them. In doing so, they exploit, above all, the poor social status and low level of intelligence of the victims and their consequent

dependence on the perpetrators, who often provide them with inhospitable and inhuman accommodation and poor-quality food. This work is often carried out abroad, but the victims do not speak any foreign languages, their personal documents are taken away by the perpetrators, and it is almost impossible for the victims to escape and return home without money, without documents and without knowledge of the language of the country in question. In these cases, it is necessary to prove, above all, the vulnerability of the victims and the fact that the perpetrator has exploited that vulnerability for their own benefit. The offence of THB is a deliberate offence under Article 179 of the Criminal Code; the law requires intent, i.e. the perpetrator's knowledge of the victim's vulnerability, as a form of culpability in committing the offence.

35. Is the concept of “abuse of a position of vulnerability” addressed in criminal justice training? Is there any specific guidance on applying this concept? Please provide copies of guidance and/or training materials that shed light on how this concept should be applied in practice.

Ministry of Interior:

In the field of crime victims and their vulnerable position in relation to criminal law, investigators of the NUFIM BBFP P PF were trained in the refresher course “Particularly vulnerable victims of crime, investigation and approach to the victim”. Also, some officers of the PF participated in training courses focused on the problems related to the application of measures aimed at combating THB in practice. The Ministry of Interior has also produced various publications, e.g. Methodological aid for victims of THB with a special focus on children and foreigners and others. We are not aware of any areas of criminal law that specifically deal with the concept of “abuse of a position of vulnerability”, however, in the individual commentaries to the existing laws, these concepts are explained and further specified. However, these are not legally binding definitions, but rather merely the private legal opinions of the drafters and editors of these commentaries, who are professionally active in the field of criminal law, such as judges, lawyers, prosecutors and the like.

The IC MI SR addresses the concept of “THB” in its educational activities, and the concept is thoroughly discussed. The IC MI SR also focuses on the vulnerability of THB victims in the training module, which is implemented and tailored to the target group. On 27 - 28 June 2023, a workshop was organised by the IC MI SR in the recreational facility of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic Duchonka in Piešťany, which focused on the implementation of Task No. 17 of the Action Plan for 2019-2023, entitled “Defining the boundary between THB for forced labour and poor working conditions”, and this activity also served to sensitise the professional public in relation to the vulnerability of THB victims of labour exploitation.

36. What procedures and measures exist in your country to take into account the specific needs of vulnerable victims at the different stages of criminal proceedings?

Ministry of Justice:

In accordance with the Act on Victims of Crime, the law enforcement authority, the court and the entity providing assistance to victims carry out an individual assessment of the victim, taking into account the seriousness and circumstances of the offence committed, in order to determine whether the victim is particularly vulnerable with a view to preventing re-victimisation or secondary victimisation; the individual assessment is updated, if necessary. Law enforcement authorities, courts and entities providing assistance to victims are obliged to take into account the best interests of the child in the case of a particularly vulnerable victim, who is a child.

The special needs of vulnerable victims are further taken into account in the Code of Criminal Procedure, Article 134(4) and, consequently, in the provisions relating to witnesses. Where a person

who is a particularly vulnerable victim according to a special regulation or a family member of such a victim is being interrogated as a witness in criminal proceedings, the interrogation shall be conducted in a considerate manner and in terms of its content so that the interrogation does not have to be repeated in subsequent proceedings; the provision of Article 135(1) shall not be affected thereby. The interrogation shall be carried out with the use of technical equipment designed for sound and image recording or with the use of technical equipment designed for the transmission and recording of sound and images; the provision of Article 270 (2) shall not be affected thereby. The law enforcement authority shall ensure that the interrogations in the pre-trial proceedings are conducted by the same person, provided that this does not interfere with the course of the criminal proceedings. Where a particularly vulnerable victim is being interrogated as a witness pursuant to a special regulation, of matters the revival of which in the victim's memory would, in view of his or her personal characteristics, relationship to the person identified by the victim as the perpetrator, to the person suspected of having committed the offence, or to the person against whom criminal proceedings are pending, or dependence on the person identified by the victim as the perpetrator, on the person, suspected of having committed the offence or the person against whom criminal proceedings are pending, or the nature and circumstances of the commission of the offence, adversely affect his or her physical integrity or mental integrity or expose him or her to the risk of secondary victimisation, a psychologist or an expert shall be brought in for questioning who, having regard to the subject matter of the questioning of the person being interrogated, shall contribute to the proper conduct of the interrogation; the provision of Article 135(1) shall not be affected thereby. Before interrogating a witness pursuant to the fourth sentence, the law enforcement authority shall consult with the psychologist or expert who will be brought in for the interrogation on the manner of conducting the interrogation in order to ensure that the interrogation is conducted properly and to prevent secondary victimisation.

If a person who is a particularly vulnerable victim under a special law is questioned as a witness in criminal proceedings for an offence against human dignity, a THB offence or the offence of cruelty to a person close to or entrusted to the person, the interrogation in the pre-trial proceedings shall, as a rule, be conducted and, where necessary, interpreted by a person of the sex designated by the person being questioned, unless this is prevented by serious reasons which the law enforcement authority is obliged to state in the record.

Questions directed to the intimate sphere of the victim being questioned may be asked only if necessary to clarify facts relevant to the criminal proceedings.

Ministry of Interior:

As regards the above, measures can be mentioned that are embedded in Article 134 of the Code of Criminal Procedure which defines that where a person who is a particularly vulnerable victim pursuant to a special regulation or a family member of such a victim is being interrogated as a witness in criminal proceedings, the interrogation shall be conducted in a considerate manner and in terms of its content so that the interrogation does not have to be repeated in subsequent proceedings. The interrogation shall be carried out with the use of technical equipment designed for sound and image recording or with the use of technical equipment designed for the transmission and recording of sound and images. The law enforcement authority shall ensure that the interrogations in the pre-trial proceedings are conducted by the same person, provided that this does not interfere with the course of the criminal proceedings. Where a particularly vulnerable victim is being interrogated as a witness pursuant to a special regulation, of matters the revival of which in the victim's memory would, in view of his or her personal characteristics, relationship to the person identified by the victim as the perpetrator, to the person suspected of having committed the offence, or to the person against whom criminal proceedings are pending, or dependence on the person identified by the victim as the perpetrator, on the person, suspected of having committed the offence or the person against whom

criminal proceedings are pending, or the nature and circumstances of the commission of the offence, adversely affect his or her physical integrity or mental integrity or expose him or her to the risk of secondary victimisation, a psychologist or an expert shall be brought in for questioning who, having regard to the subject matter of the questioning of the person being interrogated, shall contribute to the proper conduct of the interrogation. Before interrogating a witness, the law enforcement authority shall consult with the psychologist or expert who will be present during the interrogation on the manner of conducting the interrogation in order to ensure that the interrogation is conducted properly and to prevent secondary victimisation of the victim. If a person who is a particularly vulnerable victim under a special law is questioned as a witness in criminal proceedings for an offence against human dignity, a THB offence or the offence of cruelty to a person close to or entrusted to the person, the interrogation in the pre-trial proceedings shall, as a rule, be conducted and, where necessary, interpreted by a person of the sex designated by the person being questioned, unless this is prevented by serious reasons which the law enforcement authority is obliged to state in the record. At the same time, the Act on Victims of Crime pays special attention to particularly vulnerable victims.

Also, non-governmental organisations providing Assistance Programme services treat the THB victim with special consideration when conducting an identification interview and take into account the person as a particularly vulnerable victim.

Within the framework of the Assistance Programme, victims of THB are approached on the basis of an individual assistance plan, which is implemented by the service provider (SCC/GCC) on the basis of personal contact with the victim, and subsequently updated and reviewed during the process of working with the victim in order to meet the needs of the THB victim and to help him/her to recover and reintegrate/integrate into society.

37. If you have criminalised the use of services of a victim of THB, how is this provision applied in practice? Please provide any relevant case-law.

Ministry of Justice:

The use of services of a victim of THB has not been criminalised yet in the SR. For the sake of completeness, it should be added that the introduction of the criminalisation of the use of services of a victim of THB has been repeatedly proposed by the Ministry of Justice in the framework of the comprehensive amendment of the Criminal Code. There were **no** significant reservations, either technical or political, on this particular issue during the legislative process. Unfortunately, for political reasons (early parliamentary elections in September 2023), the final approval of this legislative material by Parliament did not take place. The Ministry of Justice will resubmit this proposal to the legislative process after the 2023 parliamentary elections, including a proposal to criminalise the use of services of victims of THB (professional level).

The pending unapproved proposal (Bill to amend the Criminal Code - Parliamentary Print Number 1528):

“Article 179a

Use of services of a victim of THB

(1) Whoever uses the services of a person who is a victim of THB resulting from the exploitation of such a person referred to in Article 179, shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of one to five years.

(2) The offender shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of three to eight years if he/she commits an act referred to in paragraph 1

(a) and obtains therefrom a greater benefit for themselves or for another,

(b) and by such act places another in danger of serious bodily harm or death,

(c) as a public official,

(d) on a protected person,

- (e) for a special motive, or
 (f) in a more serious manner.
- (3) The offender shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of four to ten years if he/she commits an act referred to in paragraph 1
 (a) and obtains therefrom a considerable benefit for themselves or for another or
 (b) and causes thereby grievous bodily harm or death or other particularly serious consequences.
- (4) The offender shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of seven to twelve years if he/she commits an act referred to in paragraph 1
 (a) and obtains by it for themselves or for another a benefit on a large scale,
 (b) and thereby causes grievous bodily harm to more than one person or the death of more than one or
 (c) as a member of a dangerous group.”

38. What technology-based tools and initiatives exist in your country to support investigations and enhance prosecution of THB cases? What training is provided to law enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges on THB facilitated by information and communication technology?

Ministry of Justice:

The Judicial Academy of the SR, as an independent educational institution, provides, organises and conducts training for judges, prosecutors and court officials. In the previous period, they organised events that focused mainly on:

- legislation,
- The National Referral Mechanism, which aims to provide an updated overview of the procedures in case of identification of a victim of THB,
- the Assistance Programme, which aims to establish a coordinated system, in order to reduce THB crimes;
- the exclusive material jurisdiction of the NUFIM BBFP P PF, in relation to the offence of THB,
- the usual modus operandi for the offence of THB,
- knowledge from application practice,
- international cooperation through joint investigation teams and legal aid,
- application lessons from prosecution of THB offences,
- introduction of the system of compensation for victims of violent crime under Act **on Victims of Crime**, with an emphasis on victims of THB,
- the impact of the systematic change in the compensation of victims of violent crimes from 1 July 2021, in relation to victims of THB,
- the possibilities of assistance to victims of THB,
- protection measures for victims of THB.

Ministry of Interior:

In connection with the above, it is possible to mention a task from the new National Programme for 2024 - 2028, namely measure No. 15 - the creation of a platform of cooperating private sector entities for the search of possible solutions for encouraging moral responsibility of private companies operating online communication space in the detection of THB indicators in the online environment, with the subsequent setting up of a system for reporting the results.

The NUFIM BBFP P PF is currently implementing a project entitled “Combating THB and application of tools for its prevention”, within the framework of which two special interrogation rooms are being built at the specialised operational and investigation departments West and East of the NUFIM BBFP P PF, which will be used primarily for interrogation of victims of THB.

39. In what ways, if any, does your country utilise provisions from the Council of Europe Cybercrime Convention (Budapest Convention) to fight THB? If not, why is that the case?

Ministry of Interior:

The SR signed the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention) on 4 February 2005 and ratified it on 8 January 2008 with effect from 1 May 2008.

The Cybercrime Department of the NCSTC is the 24/7 contact point of the Budapest Convention, which means that it implements the application of Article 29 of the Convention on Cybercrime. However, the Cybercrime Department of the NCSTC does not keep statistics on requests to expedite the retention of stored computer data in individual criminal cases. Thus, it is not possible to indicate how and if at all the investigators use/ have used the provisions of the Convention on Cybercrime in criminal cases related to THB.

Part II – Country-specific follow-up questions

40. Please provide information on measures taken in your country in respect to the following recommendations made in GRETA's previous reports:

- provide effective and appropriate protection for victims and witnesses of THB during the investigation, prosecution and court proceedings, including special protection measures for children;

Ministry of Interior:

The officers of the NUFIM BBFP P PF, upon first contact with a victim of THB, will adequately instruct the victim about the possibility of joining the Assistance Programme, and if the victim does not spontaneously decide to join the Assistance Programme, they will leave him/her contact details of the contracted non-governmental organisations (SCC, GCC), or refer him/her to the National Helpline for THB Victims 0800 800 818 in case he/she decides to join the Assistance Programme at a later date. A victim of THB is entitled to be included and to remain in the Assistance Programme even without active cooperation with law enforcement authorities. Should he/she later choose to cooperate, he/she is entitled to remain in the Assistance Programme and use the services provided by it for the duration of the criminal proceedings, until the final judgment of the court.

In connection with the possibility of increasing assistance to victims of THB and in an effort to take measures to improve the status of victims and facilitate access to their rights, the Director of the NUFIM BBFP P PF issued an instruction in 2020, whereby the service provider from the Assistance Programme is allowed access to the victim of THB for the purpose of a short interview, in order to provide information about the Assistance Programme and its functioning, and to stimulate his/her interest in joining the Assistance Programme. The law enforcement authority conducting criminal proceedings acts with a THB victim for the THB offence shall inform the Assistance Programme service provider well in advance of this.

If a THB victim is questioned in the framework of criminal proceedings, his/her interrogation as a particularly vulnerable victim shall be carried out using technical means of video and audio recording, whereby the said evidence may subsequently be used in further proceedings in order to prevent secondary victimisation of the victim - a psychologist or an expert is brought in to interrogate the victim, who contributes to the proper conduct of the interrogation, taking into account the subject matter of the interrogation of the interviewee.

Measures have been taken in the past in relation to the amendment and improvement of legislation on victim compensation. Act No. 215/2006 Coll. on compensation for victims of violent crime was

repealed and replaced by the Act on Victims of Crime, which deals with the compensation for such victims in its third part.

The victim is entitled to compensation from the state to the extent and under the conditions laid down in the Act on Victims of Crime. In 2021, Act No. 217/2021 Coll. amending the Act on Victims of Crime was adopted with effect from 1 July 2021. The amendment to the Act on Victims of Crime has fundamentally changed the philosophy of compensation for victims of violent crime. A key change is the introduction of the possibility for a victim of a violent crime to apply to the Ministry of Justice for compensation after the initiation of a criminal prosecution. The previous legislation allowed the victim to apply for compensation only after the final conclusion of the criminal proceedings. At the same time, access to professional assistance for victims of crime has also been facilitated through the establishment of intervention centres, which should operate within each region. At the same time, the adoption of the Act in question has streamlined and strengthened the rights of victims of crime in the light of the recommendations made by the European Commission in the report of the Special Adviser on compensation for victims of crime, in particular with reference to the procedural obstacles that victims of crime face in the procedure for the provision of compensation. The amendments to the Act also responded to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, referring to the document “EU Strategy on Victims’ Rights (2020-2025)”. The enactment of this Act has undoubtedly significantly improved the status of both victims and THB crimes in terms of timeliness in obtaining compensation and access to adequate professional assistance through the establishment of intervention centres.

Under the Act on Victims of Crime, in addition to the right to compensation for personal injury, a victim of THB is also entitled to compensation for moral damages. According to the information of the Ministry of Justice of the SR, in 2021, compensation of EUR 4,800 was paid to one victim of THB under this scheme and in 2022, compensation of EUR 4,800 was paid to one victim of THB under this scheme.

Ministry of Justice:

Where a person who is a particularly vulnerable victim or a family member of such a victim is being interrogated as a witness in criminal proceedings, the interrogation shall be conducted in a considerate manner and in terms of its content so that the interrogation does not have to be repeated in subsequent proceedings. The interrogation shall be carried out with the use of technical equipment designed for sound and image recording or with the use of technical equipment designed for the transmission and recording of sound and images. A psychologist or other appropriate person shall be brought in for interrogation.

The presiding judge shall question a witness who is a particularly vulnerable victim or a family member of such a victim pursuant to a special act in such a way as to avoid visual contact with the accused, in particular by the use of technical devices, including devices designed for the transmission of sound.

The witness may be questioned only to the extent necessary for the criminal proceedings. The witness may not be asked questions which contain how to answer the question, questions which are deceptive or questions which contain facts which are to be ascertained only from his or her testimony. The questions shall not unreasonably interfere with the privacy of the person being questioned, except to ascertain the motives of the accused, particularly where the witness is ill or a witness who has been the victim of an offence against human dignity.

If the legal conditions in Act No. 256/1998 Coll. on witness protection and on the amendment to certain acts are met (e.g. the witness has provided evidence incriminating a criminal group and is in danger of his/her life), the endangered witness and his/her close persons may be granted special protection by the state.

Under the Victims Act, victims have the right to information, to professional assistance, to protection against secondary victimisation or re-victimisation, and to compensation.

- adopt measures to facilitate and guarantee access to compensation for victims of THB;

Ministry of Interior:

The obligation to provide information to the victim at the first contact on the procedures related to his/her claim for compensation in criminal proceedings arises for the police officer from the Act on Victims of Crime (for more information on the amendment of the Act on Victims of Crime on the issue in question, see also the answer to question 40, first bullet point). The information is provided taking into account the reasonable needs of the victim, depending on his/her age, mental and volitional maturity, state of health, including psychological state, and the nature of the crime. Information concerning the right to compensation are also be provided to the injured party (victim) in writing by the law enforcement authorities during his/her questioning in criminal proceedings, and are adequately explained to him/her as appropriate according to individual needs.

At the same time, it is the right of every victim of THB to claim compensation for the damage caused to the victim by the crime. This right is guaranteed in Article 46 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, whereby the investigator, when questioning the victim, ascertains whether the victim claims against the accused for compensation for the damage caused to him/her by the offence. It must be clear from the application on what grounds and in what amount the claim for compensation is made.

In this connection, it may be noted that the provision of legal advice, as one of the services of the Assistance Programme, also includes assistance in claiming damages for the victim of THB. In the provision of legal advice, the service provider of the Assistance Programme ensures that all rights of victims of THB in relation to compensation and claiming compensation from the state are applied.

The decision on compensation in criminal proceedings is part of the court's verdict on compensation, which, in the event of a negative decision, can be challenged by the victim (injured party) himself/herself by way of an appeal.

Ministry of Justice:

The amendment to the Act on Victims of Crime (for more information on the amendment to the Act on Victims of Crime on the subject, see also the answer to question 40, first bullet point) has improved access to justice for victims of crime and has also simplified access to compensation for victims. The aim of the Act is to streamline and strengthen the rights of victims of crime, in the light of the recommendations of the European Commission addressed in the report of the Special Adviser on victims' compensation.

Under the amendment to the Act, the right to compensation arises after the initiation of criminal proceedings. Under the current legislation, legal aid is provided in criminal proceedings and civil proceedings relating to the protection and exercise of the victim's rights.

An equally significant change for victims of THB was the provision of compensation for non-pecuniary damage by the state in a lump sum of 10 times the minimum wage.

- amend the legislation to ensure that a recovery and reflection period is granted when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person is a victim of human trafficking, as provided for in Article 13 of the Convention, and ensure that it is systematically offered to all possible victims of human trafficking.

Ministry of Interior:

The IC MI SR, as the coordinator of the Assistance Programme, has prepared an amendment to the internal regulation governing the programme. The extensive amendment to the Assistance Programme, which is effective from 1 January 2021 and was published in the Journal of the Ministry of Interior on 15 December 2020, reflects the needs of application practice. The provisions on the recovery and reflection period, in accordance with the Convention, are included in the Order on the Assistance Programme as follows:

- according to Article 2(g), for the purposes of this Order, the recovery and reflection period means a period of time for the provision of the necessary crisis care and crisis intervention to enable the victim to emerge from the influence of the perpetrator and to consider the circumstances and context to make an informed decision to cooperate with law enforcement authorities for a period of not more than 90 days,
- under Article 11, dealing with the victim's cooperation with law enforcement authorities - a victim receiving care under Article 6 shall, during the recovery and reflection period, decide whether to voluntarily cooperate with law enforcement authorities. If the victim chooses to voluntarily cooperate with law enforcement authorities, the care provider under the victim Assistance Programme together with the victim shall prepare a statement of cooperation with law enforcement authorities and deliver it without delay to the IC MI SR, the NUFIM BBFP P PF and the relevant law enforcement authority, no later than 90 days after the victim's inclusion in the programme.

A period of recovery and reflection shall be allowed to all victims of THB enrolled in the Assistance Programme.

The Foreign Police Department of the BBFP P PF stated the following - the period for recovery and reflection and its provision is enshrined in Article 58(3) of the Act on Residence of Foreigners as follows: "Tolerated stay shall be deemed to be a period of not more than 90 days during which a third-country national who is a victim of THB and is at least 18 years old decides whether to cooperate with law enforcement authorities in the clarification of a THB - related crime; this period may be extended by 30 days at the request of a person authorised by the Ministry of Interior."

41. Please provide information on developments in your country since GRETA's third evaluation report concerning:

- emerging trends of trafficking in human beings;

Ministry of Interior:

The THB area has undergone several changes since the last evaluation period. The SR has increasingly become a country of so-called domestic THB, where both the recruitment and the actual exploitation of the victim takes place in the SR. The number of investigated cases of THB with a place of exploitation in the SR accounted for about 1/3 of the total number of investigated cases in the 2019-2022 assessment period, with the exception of 2019 and 2020, when the highest number of victims of THB were identified in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, however these were victims whose exploitation took place in the pre-Brexit period, so we do not see this figure as indicative. In the previous assessment period, the most frequent country of exploitation of Slovak victims of THB was the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; since Brexit, we have not recorded any new victims of THB in this country.

Sexual exploitation remains the most common purpose of THB in the period under review, with a decrease in the proportion of victims exploited for forced begging.

The most significant change is the increased number of identified child victims of THB, whose proportion was in some years as high as 1/3 of all identified victims.

The remaining trend is the low identification of foreign victims, with a total of 8 THB victims in the period 2019-2022 (a victim from Afghanistan was statistically listed in both 2019 and 2020, therefore

there were 7 foreign victims of THB in the assessed period). The NUFIM BBFP P PF investigated a number of complaints and suspicions, but after the verification, the substantive element of the offence of THB under Article 179 of the Criminal Code, necessary to initiate criminal proceedings for the commission of the offence of THB, was fulfilled in none of them. More detailed information on the new trends in the area of THB is also provided in the response to question 1 of the questionnaire.

Situation reports are published annually on the website of the Ministry of Interior, in the 'downloadable documents' section, detailing new trends in the area of THB for each year: <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality>.

- the legislation and regulations relevant to action against THB;

Ministry of Interior:

The NUFIM BBFP P PF issued the following internal regulations during the period under review:

- **Instruction of the Director of the NUFIM BBFP P PF dated 11 June 2020**, to allow the service contractor of the Assistance Programme (SCC) access to the victim for the purpose of a short interview, in order to instruct and motivate the victim to enter the Assistance Programme.
- **Instruction of the Director of the NUFIM BBFP P PF, dated 1 March 2022**, issuing a methodological guideline for the investigators of the NUFIM BBFP P PF, to ensure the reporting of child victims of THB to the SLPCSG authorities, in order to provide timely protection and assistance to child victims of THB.

The IC MI SR provides, in accordance with point I b) of Measure of the State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior No. 58/2015 on the tasks of the IC MI SR, the coordination and monitoring of the Assistance Programme. The IC MI SR, as the coordinator of the Assistance Programme, has prepared an amendment to the **internal regulation on the Assistance Programme** governing the programme. The extensive amendment to the Assistance Programme, which is effective from 1 January 2021 and was published in the Journal of the Ministry of Interior on 15 December 2020, reflects the needs of application practice, clarifies the provision of assistance and support to victims of THB, the conduct of the identification interview and clarifies the provisions relating to child victims of THB. The new regulation also incorporates the instruction of the Director of the NUFIM of 11 June 2020 (Article 11(3)), as well as some parts of the instruction of the Director of the BBFP P PF of 12 December 2011, which issues methodological guidance for officers of the Border and Foreign Police and for officers of the NUFIM BBFP P PF to ensure uniform identification of potential victims of THB.

The Act on Health Insurance was also amended, in the part concerning the delegation of competence in the matter of reimbursement of healthcare for a foreigner granted subsidiary protection and the addition of a foreigner with tolerated stay, who was included in the Assistance Programme. The amendment to the Act on Health Insurance took effect on 1 January 2021. The amendment resolved the eligibility of foreign nationals granted tolerated stay as victims of THB enrolled in the Assistance Programme for healthcare reimbursement until they are removed from the Assistance Programme.

Since 1 February 2023, an amendment to the Crime Prevention Act has been in force, by which the Information Offices have been legislatively anchored as part of the organisational structure of the Ministry of Interior in order to improve the protection, support and assistance to victims of crime and other antisocial activities.

Ministry of Justice:

In the area of assistance to victims of crime, the Ministry of Justice implemented an **amendment to the Act on Victims of Crime, effective from 1 January 2020**, which expanded the rights of the victim's family members.

The amendment to the Act on Victims of Crime with effect from 1 July 2021 introduced the possibility for a victim of a violent crime to apply to the Ministry of Justice of the SR for compensation after the commencement of a criminal prosecution. The previous legislation allowed the victim to apply for compensation only after the final conclusion of the criminal proceedings. At the same time, access to professional assistance for victims of crime has also been facilitated through the establishment of intervention centres, which should operate within each region.

Act No. 312/2020 Coll. on the execution of property seizure decision and seized property management and on the amendment to certain acts also **amended the Criminal Code, with effect from 1 January 2021**, and extended the principle of impunity to victims of THB. The amended Article 40(2) of the Criminal Code states that the punishment of a perpetrator of an offence may be waived if the offence was committed by a person under coercion, in direct connection with the commission of the offence of THB under Article 179, the offence of sexual abuse under Articles 201 to 202, the offence of cruelty to a person close to or entrusted to the person under Article 208, or the offence of production of child pornography under Article 368. Prior to this amendment, waiver of punishment under Article 40 of the Criminal Code was only available in relation to the commission of a misdemeanour which a person was compelled to commit in direct connection with the commission of the offence of THB under Article 179 of the Criminal Code. The amendment thus extended the provision on the possibility of waiving punishment or of impunity of victims of THB to criminal offences in addition to the commission of misdemeanours. The Act also regulates the execution of decisions on seizure of property issued in criminal proceedings, including the execution of decisions on seizure of property in the framework of international cooperation of judicial authorities in criminal matters. The Act further regulates seized property management, which in the case of criminal proceedings means transferring the responsibility for the management of seized property from law enforcement authorities to a special Office for the Management of Seized Property. Thus, law enforcement agencies do not have to deal with the complicated issues of how to manage seized property of various kinds, which should encourage them to seize more.

Ministry of Economy:

In the SR, the Ministry of Economy is the coordinator for the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market (COM/2022/453 final), which is available at: [EUR-Lex - 52022PC0453 - SK - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/lexuris/ui/entry.do?entryId=52022PC0453).

- the institutional and policy framework for action against THB (co-ordinating bodies, specialised entities, national rapporteur or equivalent mechanism, involvement of civil society, public-private partnerships);

Ministry of Interior:

Developments and changes that have taken place in the field since the third GRETA evaluation report:

Amendment and publication of the National Referral Mechanism in 2020. Further information is provided in the answer to question 2(c).

Amendment of the internal legal regulation of the Ministry of Interior - Order on the Assistance Programme. Further information is provided in the answer to question 3.

During the period under review, the **current National Programme and Action Plan for 2019-2023 was approved**. Further information is provided in the answer to question 1 and under the next bullet below - on the current National Strategy and Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings.

At the same time, a **new National Programme and Action Plan for 2024-2028** has been prepared. Further information is provided in the answer to question 1 and under the next bullet below - on the current National Strategy and Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings.

No changes have been made at the level of the National Coordinator and the National Rapporteur; it is still the case that the State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior is the National Coordinator and the IC MI SR is the National Rapporteur.

- the current national strategy and/or action plan for combating trafficking in human beings (objectives, main activities, budget, bodies responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of results);

Ministry of Interior:

On 6 November 2018, the National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings for 2019 - 2023 was approved by Government Resolution of the SR No. 495/2018. This is the fifth national programme on THB issues and it is published on the website of the Ministry of Interior <https://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality>, bot in Slovak and English.

The existence of the National Programme is based primarily on international commitments as well as national needs for a coordinated approach to combating THB. The National Programme is a strategic document consisting of two parts - Part A is a description of the situation of THB and Part B is the Action Plan for 2019-2023. This strategic document focuses on a comprehensive and effective fight against THB, which promotes the development of coordinated action by all actors in reducing the risks and preventing the commission of THB crimes, as well as in creating the conditions for providing support and assistance to victims of THB and ensuring the protection of their human rights, freedoms and dignity, taking into account the individual needs of each person. In the implementation of individual activities, the principle of active participation of the Government, central and local government authorities, close cooperation with relevant civil society organisations active in the fight against THB, as well as respect for human rights and freedoms is maintained. Active participation and fulfilment of tasks divided according to the areas covering it, the set goal can be achieved, i.e. the narrowing of the space for committing the crime of THB. The activities carried out for the implementation of the National Programme for 2019-2023 are financially covered by the State Budget of the SR.

The main objective of the National Programme is to introduce a coordinated system with a view to reduce the criminal activities of THB i.e. to narrow the space for committing the crime of THB with respect to the current trends and development of situation in the area, which includes the orientation at the perpetrators and potential victims of THB. To cover both sides, it is necessary to focus both on the strengthening of the existing instruments, which have proved good over the years, as well on new instruments of fighting against THB, which reflect new trends in committing the crime of THB. To reach the main objective, attention must be paid to partial areas covered by the already known expression of important areas or approaches, i.e. **“Four Ps”** – **“Prevention“**, **“Protection“**, **“Prosecution“**, **“Partnership“**. The tasks from the current Action Plan are divided into these four areas to cover the full spectrum of THB. A total of 21 tasks are included in the current National Programme. The evaluation of the implementation of the tasks is discussed annually by the inter-ministerial Expert Group on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, established at the Ministry of Interior, chaired by the National Coordinator for combating THB - the State Secretary in charge of the Ministry of Interior. The expert group is composed of representatives of the relevant ministries, the Government

Office of the SR, the General Prosecutor's Office, the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia, representatives of civil society, as well as the IOM. In accordance with point B.5. of Government Resolution of the SR No. 495/2018, the evaluation of the implementation of the tasks for the entire programming period of the National Programme is also submitted to the meeting of the Government of the SR. Comprehensive evaluations of the National Programme are also published on the website of the Ministry of Interior and therefore will not be the subject and content of this material <http://www.minv.sk/?informacne-centrum-na-boj-proti-obchodovaniu-s-ludmi-a-prevenciu-kriminality>.

The National Programme for 2024-2028, currently under preparation, focuses on the creation of effective tools for early identification, effective protection and assistance to victims, successful prosecution of perpetrators and the imposition of just punishment, as well as on the harmonisation of structures and procedures for referral of victims to support systems. These are problematic areas that deserve increased attention. The material also includes an Action Plan for 2024 to 2028. It consists of 19 measures. For example, it is proposed to establish a national contact point for referring victims, to deepen international police cooperation, and to improve and streamline the collection of statistical indicators on THB. It is also intended to adjust the level of the sentencing tariff for the basic and qualified body of the crime of THB in order to minimise the use of the possibility of extraordinary reduction of imprisonment in the imposition of suspended prison sentences, as well as to create opportunities for effective compensation for victims. In the context of the 4 P framework (assistance and protection, prosecution, partnership and prevention), a number of key, priority areas have been identified:

1. Ensuring early identification of victims and improving the quality of services provided to victims of THB (assistance and protection);
2. Improving the quality of criminal prosecution (prosecution);
3. Partnership progress (partnership);
4. More effective use of prevention tools by stepping up support and implementation (prevention)

Within the priority area - **Ensuring early identification of victims of THB and improving the quality of services provided (assistance and protection)** the strategic objectives include:

- a) Improving the identification of potential victims with a specific focus on vulnerable groups;
- b) Harmonising and formalising the procedures of the structures involved in victim referral, while consistently applying the principle of non-discrimination to support systems;
- c) Improving the system of assistance to victims of THB in the light of developments in the field.

Within the priority area - **improving the quality of criminal prosecution** in order to punish the perpetrator, to compensate the victim of THB, to increase the success rate of prosecution of perpetrators also by deepening **cooperation with other states and international institutions** in the field of mutual exchange of information and handling of requests (criminal prosecution). This can be achieved through the identified strategic objectives:

- a) Modification of the legislation on the offence of THB, with a focus on increasing the penalty rate;
- b) Seeking solutions to avoid the imposition of suspended prison sentences through the use of exceptional reductions in prison sentences and the systematic application of compensation for damages in criminal proceedings, while avoiding delays in criminal proceedings;
- c) Proposing legislative measures to reduce the demand for the conscious use of victim services;
- d) Improving the response of law enforcement authorities to the perpetration of the THB crime through technology.

Within the priority area - **Partnership**, in order to ensure the smooth functioning of national tools for early identification and provision of assistance to victims of THB, it is necessary to continue to develop cooperation both at the national level between state and non-state actors, as well as at the international level, and to focus on the fulfilment of the set strategic objectives:

- a) Harmonised collection and exchange of relevant and comparable data at national level, usable for both national institutions and EU data collection;

- b) Improving the performance of cooperation checks by trained personnel, with an emphasis on the identification of signs of THB, with a victim-centred approach;
- c) Ensuring the sustainability of effective international cooperation.

Within the priority area - **Prevention**, progress in the prevention of trafficking in human beings can be made through non-legislative measures, also aimed at reducing the demand for sexual services, cheap labour and products. Strategic objectives in this area:

- a) Implementation of targeted information activities and campaigns in the field of combating THB for multiple target groups, in cooperation with civil society, international organisations, private sector, at national as well as international level, with an emphasis on the online space;
- b) Implementation of training activities aimed at pedagogical and professional staff, psychologists and social workers on the topic of THB, with a specific focus on child victims, in cooperation with civil society;
- c) Finding solutions to encourage private companies to take responsibility for preventing THB, including in the online environment;
- d) Raising the awareness of judges and prosecutors through educational activities;
- e) Strengthening tertiary prevention through probation programmes and the use of electronic monitoring.

Partnership is a cross-cutting part of the 4P framework. The implementation of activities in this area will also ensure the timeliness of victim identification, help to improve the quality of criminal prosecution and the implementation of preventive activities, which overlaps into the parts of assistance and protection of victims, criminal prosecution and prevention, thus confirming the fact that the 4P framework represents interconnected parts and that the implementation of all measures will ensure a comprehensive progress and an effective fight against trafficking in human beings.

The material was submitted to the Government of the SR on 18 October 2023 and approved by Resolution No. 522/2023.

- recent case-law concerning THB for different forms of exploitation.

Information about recent case-law concerning THB for different forms of exploitation:

District Court Banská Bystrica, Case : 5T/44/2019, Decision dated 2 December 2019

Regional Court Prešov, Case: 1To/27/2019, Decision dated 9 October 2019

Supreme Court of the SR, Case: 2Tdo/18/2018, Order dated 21 June 2018

Ruling of the Constitutional Court, IV. ÚS 280/2021-62.

Part III - Statistics on THB

42. Please provide the following statistics, per year starting with 2019, where available disaggregated as indicated below:

- Number of presumed victims and identified victims of THB in the sense of having been recognised by a state institution or mandated NGO as bearers of rights to services provided for by the Convention (with breakdown by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation, internal or transnational trafficking, and body which identified them).

Total number of identified victims of THB for 2019 - 2022

Year	Total number of identified victims		Number of victims formally identified by the POLICE		Origin of victims
2019	66	35 males	53	29 men	SR (65)

Year	Sex	Age		Nationality	Form of exploitation		Internal/transnational	The body which identified them
		Female	Male		Female	Male		
2021	male 15 female 20	up to 17.99 y. 9 18-30 y. 8 31 - 60 y. 3 over 60 y.0	up to 17.99 y. 3 18-30 y. 5 31 - 60 y. 7 over 60 y.0	SVK 33 Vietnam2	sexual labour forced marriage child prostitution 14 3 3 1	labour sexual illegal adoption forced criminal activities 11 2 1 1	Slovakia 13 Great Britain 10 Germany 8 Czech Republic 4	
2022	male 18 female 27	up to 17.99 y.10 18-30 y. 16 31 - 60 y. 1 over 60 y.0	up to 17.99 y.0 18-30 y. 11 31 - 60 y. 7 over 60 y.0	SVK 45	sexual labour forced marriage 20 5 2	labour begging and labour 17 1	Slovakia 17 Germany 15 Great Britain 8 Ireland 2 Austria 1 Czech Republic 1 Sweden 1	

*some victims were exploited by more than one type of exploitation at the same time; for this reason, the number of victims by type of exploitation is higher than the total number of victims

THB victims included in the Assistance Programme/SCC and GCC

Year	Number of victims in the Assistance Programme	Sex	Age	Nationality	Form of exploitation	Internal/transnational	The body which identified them
2019	16	Male:7 Female:9	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 4 21-30: 3 31-40: 0 41-50: 4 51-60: 3 61-70: 2	SR - 16	Sex. exploitation: 5 Forced labour: 4 Forced begging: 4 Forced marriage: 2 Domestic slavery: 1	I: 4 T: 19	Non-governmental organisation: 5 Police: 11
2020	10	Male:6 Female:4	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 2 21-30: 4 31-40: 1 41-50: 2 51-60: 0 61-70: 1	SR - 9 CN - 1	Sex. exploitation: 2 Forced labour: 6 Forced begging: 1 Forced marriage: 1	I: 4 T: 6	Non-governmental organisation: 5 Police: 4 State authority: 1
2021	9	Male:6 Female:3	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 1	SR - 9	Sex. exploitation: 2 Forced labour: 5 Forced begging: 1	I: 2 T: 7	Non-governmental organisation: 5

			21-30: 4 31-40: 0 41-50: 2 51-60: 0 61-70: 1 71-80: 1		Forced criminal activities: 1		Police: 4
2022	21	Male:9 Female:1 2	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 4 21-30: 8 31-40: 2 41-50: 5 51-60: 2 61-70: 0	SR - 19 RO- 1 UA- 1	Sex. exploitation: 9 Forced labour: 10 Forced begging: 1 Forced marriage:1	I: 5 T: 16	Non-governmental organisation: 8 Police: 13

- Number of victims of THB identified as part of the asylum procedure (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation).

Number of victims of THB identified as part of the asylum procedure/MO MI SR

Year	Victims by sex	Age of victims		Nationality	Form of exploitation	
2019	0	0	0	-	0	0
2020	Female: 1	Female: 1 17 years old (year of birth 2003)	Male: 0	Afghanistan	Female: 1 forced marriage (transnational THB)	Male: 0
2021	0	0	0	-	0	0
2022	Female: 1	Female: 1 25 years old (year of birth 1997)	Male: 0	Nepal	Female: 1 sexual exploitation (transnational THB)	Male: 0

- The year 2019: 0 victims
- The year 2020: 1 victim, female, born in 2003 (17 years old), nationality Afghanistan, forced marriage, transnational THB
- The year 2021: 0 victims
- The year 2022: 1 victim, female, born in 1997 (25 years old), nationality Nepal, sexual exploitation, transnational THB

The first identified victim from Afghanistan was granted asylum in Slovakia in 2020.

The second identified victim from Nepal had her asylum proceedings terminated in 2022 as she left the territory of the Slovak Republic.

- Number of victims of THB who received assistance (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation, internal or transnational trafficking).

Ministry of Interior:

The total number of clients who contacted the Information Offices on the topic of THB in the period 2019-2022 was **16**. Of that number, **females accounted for 8 cases**.

- Number of clients in relation to the THB topic in 2019 - 1. Of that number, females accounted for 1 case.
- Number of clients in relation to the THB topic in 2020 - 4. Of that number, females accounted for 1 case.
- Number of clients in relation to the THB topic in 2021 - 5. Of that number, females accounted for 2 cases.
- Number of clients in relation to the THB topic in 2022 - 6. Of that number, females accounted for 4 cases.

Ministry of Justice:

The Ministry of Justice provides free legal aid through Accredited Entities, but they do not collect such data.

- Number of child victims of THB who were appointed legal guardians.

Ministry of Interior:

In the assessment period 2019-2022, a total of 29 child victims were appointed a legal guardian in THB cases investigated, in each year as follows: 2019 – 7 child victims, 2020 – 9 child victims, 2021 – 7 child victims and 2022 – 6 child victims.

- Number of victims of THB granted a recovery and reflection period (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation).

THB victims included in the Assistance Programme/SCC and GCC

Year	Number of victims in the Assistance Programme	Sex	Age	Nationality	Form of exploitation	Internal/transnational	The body which identified them
2019	16	Male:7 Female:9	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 4 21-30: 3 31-40: 0 41-50: 4 51-60: 3 61-70: 2	SR-16	Sex. exploitation: 5 Forced labour: 4 Forced begging: 4 Forced marriage: 2 Domestic slavery: 1	I: 4 T: 19	Non-governmental organisation: 5 Police: 11
2020	10	Male:6 Female:4	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 2 21-30: 4 31-40: 1 41-50: 2	SR - 9 CN- 1	Sex. exploitation: 2 Forced labour: 6 Forced begging: 1 Forced marriage: 1	I: 4 T: 6	Non-governmental organisation: 5 Police: 4

			51-60: 0 61-70: 1				State authority: 1
2021	9	Male:6 Female:3	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 1 21-30: 4 31-40: 0 41-50: 2 51-60: 0 61-70: 1 71-80: 1	SR - 9	Sex. exploitation: 2 Forced labour: 5 Forced begging: 1 Forced criminal activities: 1	I: 2 T: 7	Non-governmental organisation: 5 Police: 4
2022	21	Male:9 Female:1 2	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 4 21-30: 8 31-40: 2 41-50: 5 51-60: 2 61-70: 0	SR-19 RO- 1 UA- 1	Sex. exploitation: 9 Forced labour: 10 Forced begging: 1 Forced marriage:1	I: 5 T: 16	Non-governmental organisation: 8 Police: 13

- Number of victims of THB granted a residence permit, with an indication of the type of the permit (for the purpose of co-operation in the investigation/proceedings, on personal grounds, other) and its duration (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation).

Victims of THB granted a residence permit

Year	Victims by sex	Age of victims (when entering the Assistance Programme)	Nationality	Form of exploitation	Residence permit, type and validity
2019	0	0	0	0	0
2020	Female: 1	17 years	Afghanistan	Forced marriage	Permanent residence 10 June 2020-9 June 2023, purpose of stay - asylum seeker
2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	Female: 1	55 years	Ukraine	Forced labour	Tolerated stay 7 October 2022 - 4 March 2024, purpose of stay - temporary shelter

- Number of persons given refugee status or subsidiary/complementary protection on the grounds of being victims of THB (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation).

THB victims given refugee status or subsidiary/complementary protection /MO MI SR

Year	Victims by sex	Age of victims		Nationality	Form of exploitation		Asylum/subsidiary protection granted
2019	0	0	0	-	0	0	-
2020	Female: 1	Female: 17 years old (year of birth 2003)	Male: 0	Female:Afghanis tan	Female: 1 forced marriage (transnational THB)	Male: 0	Female: Asylum granted in the Slovak Republic
2021	0	0	0	-	0	0	-
2022	Female: 1	Female: 25 years old (year of birth 1997)	Male: 0	Female: Nepal	Female: 1 sexual exploitation (transnational THB)	Male: 0	Female: The asylum procedure was terminated in 2022, the departure of the person from the territory of the Slovak Republic

- The year 2019: 0 victims
 - The year 2020: 1 victim, female, born in 2003, nationality Afghanistan, forced marriage, transnational THB – the above identified **victim from Afghanistan was granted asylum in the Slovak Republic in 2020**
 - The year 2021: 0 victims
 - The year 2022: 1 victim, female, born in 1997, nationality Nepal, sexual exploitation, transnational THB - the above identified victim from Nepal had her asylum proceedings terminated in 2022 as she left the territory of the Slovak Republic.
- Number of victims of THB who claimed compensation, who were granted compensation and who effectively received compensation (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation, with an indication of whether the compensation was provided by the perpetrator or the State, and the amount awarded).

Ministry of Justice:

The number of victims of THB crime is relatively low, oscillating between 1 and 2 cases per year, as there are also relatively few prosecutions for THB crime. Specifically, 2019 - 2 compensation cases, 2020 - 1, 2021 - 1 and 2022 - 1. These are all cases where compensation has been paid by the state.

Number of victims of THB - claim for compensation filed in criminal proceedings: 4 females included in 2019

1. The client died during the pre-trial stage.
2. The client referred to civil proceedings to recover damages. She refused to cooperate.

3. The client referred to civil proceedings to recover damages. A request submitted to the Ministry of Justice. Partial compensation from the state was granted to the extent of compensation for moral damages (EUR 4,800.00).

4. Rejection of the request submitted to the Ministry of Justice at the pre-trial stage on the grounds that the results of the investigation to date do not raise reasonable doubts that the victim of a violent crime has suffered non-pecuniary damage by an act which has the characteristics of a criminal offence. In view of the current state of the proceedings, where the charges against a particular person have been dropped, the investigation is at a stage where, in the absence of facts indicating a presumption that a crime has been committed and committed by a particular person, the condition for compensation is not met. The possibility of reapplying for compensation in the event of a shift in the investigation.

1 male included in 2020

1. The client referred to civil proceedings to recover damages. A request submitted to the Ministry of Justice. Full compensation awarded (EUR 3,070.00).

1 female, 1 male in 2021

1. Prosecution discontinued due to the death of the perpetrator. Request to the Ministry of Justice was not submitted due to the client's non-cooperation.

2. The client was awarded compensation in criminal proceedings in the amount of EUR 4,742.00. He entered the Assistance Programme at the time when the time limit for compensation from the state had expired. Motion for execution filed (EUR 5,372.72 with interests and charges).

2 females in 2022

1. Compensation awarded to two victims in criminal proceedings. A request for compensation submitted to the Ministry of Justice. Currently under consideration.

Compensation claims are being considered in ongoing criminal proceedings at the investigation/pre-trial stage.

Number of victims of THB

who requested compensation from the state - 8 in total, nationality SR

2 females (sexual exploitation, included in the Assistance Programme in 2019), 1 male (forced labour and forced marriage, included in the Assistance Programme in 2016 and the request submitted in 2019), 1 male (forced labour, included in the Assistance Programme in 2020), requests currently under consideration by the Ministry of Justice, 2 females and 2 males (sexual exploitation, forced labour 2022),

to whom compensation has been awarded: 1 female and 1 male, compensation provided by the state, EUR 4,800.00 (2021) and EUR 3,070.00 (2023).

who have actually received compensation: 1 female EUR 4,800.00 and 1 male EUR 3,070.00.

- Number of victims of THB who received another form of financial support from the State, with the indication of the amount received.

No background material was sent by the requested entities on the above issue.

- Number of victims of THB who received free legal aid.

Ministry of Interior:

In 2019-2022, 74 clients were enrolled in the Assistance Programme. Of these, 21 clients were enrolled in the care of the GCC, with the rest in the care of the SCC. Of the total number of clients in the care of the SCC and GCC, 55 clients - 15 of whom were from the GCC - received **free legal aid**.

2019: 26 victims

2020: 6 victims

2021: 6 victims

2022: 17 victims

In fact, there were more of them in each year, due to the fact that clients were provided assistance for more than one year. However, they were only counted once.

Ministry of Justice:

The Ministry of Justice provides free legal aid through Accredited Entities, but they do not collect such data.

- Number of victims of THB who were returned or repatriated to/from your country (disaggregated by sex, age, country of destination, form of exploitation).

Number of victims of THB who were returned or repatriated/SCC and GCC:

Year	Number of victims returned or repatriated	Sex	Age	Countries of destination	Form of exploitation
2019	6	Male: 3 Female: 3	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 1 21-30: 0 31-40: 1 41-50: 2 51-60: 1 61-70: 1	GB: 2 IT: 1 ES: 1 RO: 1 NL: 1	Forced labour: 2 Forced begging: 1 Forced marriage: 2 Domestic slavery: 1
2020	3	Male: 2 Female: 1	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 1 21-30: 1 31-40: 1 41-50: 0 51-60: 0 61-70: 0	GB: 3	Sexual exploitation: 1 Forced labour: 2
2021	6	Male: 4 Female: 2	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 0 21-30: 3 31-40: 0 41-50: 1 51-60: 0 61-70: 1 71-80: 1	GB: 2 CZ: 1 DE: 1 IE: 2	Sex. exploitation: 1 Forced labour: 5
2022	3	Male: 1 Female: 2	Up to 18: 0 18-20: 1 21-30: 1 31-40: 0 41-50: 1		Sex. exploitation: 2 Forced labour: 1

			51-60: 0		
			61-70: 0		

- Number of investigations into THB cases (disaggregated by type of exploitation, with an indication of the number of victims concerned).

Number of investigations into THB cases/NUFIM BBFP P PF:

Year	Number of cases investigated	Form of exploitation in the investigated cases	Number of victims	Form of exploitation of victims *
2019	20	sexual 8 forced marriage 4 forced begging 3 labour 2 forced criminal activities 1 labour, forced criminal activities 1 labour, forced marriage, other form of exploitation 1	male 29 female 24	labour 28 sexual 11 begging 7 forced marriage 5 forced criminal activities 4 other form 4
2020	28	sexual 15 labour 2 begging 3 forced marriage 3 sexual and forced marriage 2 child prostitution and forced marriage 1 sexual and labour 1 sexual and forced begging 1	male 22 female 32	labour 20 sexual 20 begging 10 forced marriage 7 child prostitution 1
2021	19	sexual 9 labour 4 forced marriage 1 illegal adoption 1 forced criminal activities 1 sexual and forced marriage 1 sexual and labour 1 sexual and production and distribution of child pornography 1	male 15 female 20	sexual 16 labour 14 forced marriage 3 illegal adoption 1 child prostitution 1 forced criminal activities 1
2022	25	sexual 17 labour 4 forced marriage 2 forced begging and labour 1 other form 1	male 18 female 27	sexual 20 labour 22 forced marriage 2 begging and labour 1

*some victims were exploited by more than one type of exploitation at the same time; for this reason, the number of victims by type of exploitation is higher than the total number of victims

- Number of prosecutions in THB cases (disaggregated by type of exploitation, with an indication of the number of victims and defendants concerned).

Number of persons prosecuted and indicted/General Prosecutor's Office:

Year	Number of persons prosecuted		Number of persons indicted		Plea bargain
2019	51	37 males	38	28 males	3
		14 females		10 females	
2020	25	20 males	14	11 males	0
		5 females		3 females	
2021	39	24 males	21	12 males	9
		15 females		9 females	
2022	34	16 females	30	15 females	0
		18 males		15 males	

- Number of convicted perpetrators of THB (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation).

Ministry of Justice:

Year	Number of convicted perpetrators of THB	Sex	Age	Nationality	Form of exploitation
2019	11	6 males	Males: 31-40: 3 51-60: 3	SK: 6 males	forced begging 2 forced labour 2 forced marriage 1 sexual exploitation 6
		5 females	Females: 21-30: 1 31-40: 3 41-50: 1	SK: 5 females	
2020	9	7 males	21-30: 1 31-40: 2 41-50: 3 51-60: 1	SK: 6 males RO: 1 male	forced begging 3 judgments sexual exploitation 2 judgments forced marriage of a child 1 judgment
		2 females	31-40: 1 41-50: 1	CZ: 1 female SK: 1 female	
2021	21	14 males	up to 18: 1 21-30: 1 31-40: 6 41-50: 3 51-60: 3	SK: 14 males	sexual exploitation 13 (8 males, 5 females) forced begging 6 (5 males, 1 female) forced labour 2 (1 male and 1 female)
		7 females	18-20: 1 21-30: 2 31-40: 1 41-50: 1 51-60: 2	SK: 7 females	
2022	8	6 males	21-30: 1 31-40: 1	HU: 1 male SK: 5 males	sexual exploitation of girls 6 judgments

		41-50: 2 51-60: 2		labour exploitation 1 judgment
	2 females	31-40: 1 41-50: 1	SK: 2 females	

- Number of convictions for THB, with an indication of the form of exploitation, whether the victim was adult or child, the type and duration of the penalties, and whether they were effectively enforced or suspended.

Ministry of Justice:

The statistical data relates to the number of victims, together with their identification in cases where there has been a conviction for a THB offence under Article 179 of the Criminal Code for the period 2019-2022.

Identification of the victim	2019	2020	2021	2022
1 – natural person - male	23	2	10	3
2 – natural person - female	5	5	24	2
4 – natural person - girl	3	2	8	4

- Number of judgments in THB cases resulting in the confiscation of assets.

Ministry of Justice:

There has been no confiscation of assets in any of the THB proceedings.

- Number of convictions of legal entities for THB.

Ministry of Justice:

No legal entities were convicted for THB during the reporting period.

List of abbreviations:

Accredited Entities - entities accredited pursuant to Act No. 274/2017 Coll. on victims of crime and on the amendment to certain acts

Action Plan – Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings

Act on Employment Services - Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services and on the amendment to certain acts

Act on Health Insurance - Act No. 580/2004 Coll. on health insurance and on the amendment to Act No. 95/2002 Coll. on insurance system and on the amendment to certain acts as amended, and which amends certain acts

Act on Sport - Act No. 440/2015 Coll. on sport and on the amendment to certain acts

Act on the Residence of Foreigners– No. 404/2011 Coll. on the residence of foreigners and on the amendment to certain acts

Act on Victims of Crime - Act No. 274/2017 Coll. on victims of crime and on the amendment to certain acts

Assistance Programme - support and protection programme for victims of trafficking in human beings

BBFP P PF – Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Presidium of the Police Force

CCF – centres for children and families

CLSAF – Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

CMC - Coordination and Methodological Centre for Gender-Based and Domestic Violence

Code of Criminal Procedure - Act No. 301/2005 Coll. Code of Criminal Procedure, as amended

Contingency Plan - Contingency plan of the Slovak Republic for dealing with the emergency situation in connection with the mass influx of the population of Ukraine to the territory of the Slovak Republic caused by the escalation of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine for the period October 2022 - March 2023

Convention – Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

CPD OMI SR – Crime Prevention Department of the Office of the Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic

Crime Prevention Act - Act No. 583/2008 Coll. on the prevention of crime and other antisocial activities and on the amendment to certain acts

Criminal Code - Act No. 300/2005 Coll., Criminal Code, as amended

Cybercrime Department of the NCSTC - Cybercrime Department of the National Centre for Special Types of Crime of the Presidium of the Police Force

EU – European Union

Expert Group - Expert Group on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

GCC – Greek Catholic Charity Prešov

General Prosecutor’s Office – General Prosecutor’s Office of the Slovak Republic

IC MISR – Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and for Crime Prevention of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic

ICT – information and communication technologies

Information Offices - Information Offices for Victims of Crime

IOM – International Organisation for Migration

KG – kindergartens

Labour Code - Act No. 311/2001 Coll., Labour Code, as amended

Media Services Act - Act No. 264/2022 Coll. on media services and on the amendment to certain acts

MO MI SR – Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic

MRC – marginalised Roma communities

National Programme - National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings

NUFIM BBFP P PF – National Unit of Fight against Illegal Migration of the Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Presidium of the Police Force

OGPRC – Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities

OIS MI SR – Office of the Inspection Service of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic

Order on the Assistance Programme - Order of the Ministry of Interior No. 161/2020 on providing the support and protection programme for victims of trafficking in human beings

PDCF - Police Detention Centre for Foreigners

PS – primary schools

SCC – Slovak Catholic Charity

SLPCSG – social and legal protection of children and social guardianship

SNCHR – Slovak National Centre for Human Rights

SR – Slovak Republic

SS – secondary schools

THB – trafficking in human beings

UM – unaccompanied minors

Uni. – universities