



Government of the Republic of North Macedonia
National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and
Illegal Migration

2018 ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR COMBATTING TRAFFICKING IN
HUMAN BEINGS AND ILLEGAL MIGRATION

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1. Supporting framework

1.1 COORDINATING STRUCTURES

The National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration¹ (the Commission) is a body unifying and coordinating all stakeholders in the fight against trafficking in human beings. The Commission is headed by a National Coordinator², there is a Deputy National Coordinator, Secretary and members of the Commission³

Within the Commission there is a Secretariat⁴, in charge of implementing the decisions of the Commission and a Subgroup for combatting child trafficking, both established in 2003.⁵

Due to staff changes in the Ministry of Interior in 2017, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia appointed a new Coordinator of the National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration.⁶

The Commission continuously organises meetings⁷ whereby significant solutions and commitments for promoting the area of combatting trafficking in human beings and illegal migration are being discussed and proposed.

Special mechanisms have been developed for combatting trafficking in human beings and illegal migration and a clear task distribution was done for the central and local organisations, for the identification, assistance and support of victims of trafficking and risk groups.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), i.e. the Equal Opportunities Sector, via the Office of the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of THB (NRM) in the course of 2018, continued to implement the activities stipulated in the National Strategy (NS) and the 2017-2020 NAP. Furthermore, the cooperation and coordination with the social workers from the Social Work Centres (in 30 towns in RM), labour inspectors, the Ministry of Interior/the National Unit (Task Force) for the Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings, with the Centre for Victims of THB and sexual violence, as well as with Civic Associations was continuous.

In 2018, with the support from an international and local expert hired by

¹Decision published in the "Official Gazette of the RM" no. 18/2001.

²The Government adopted a Resolution on appointing a National Coordinator and members of the National Commission at its session held on 30.01 2007.

³Members of the Commission: MoI, MFA, MLSP, MJ, MES, Ministry of Health, Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for organised crime and corruption, Judge from the Basic Court Skopje 1, State Inspectorate for Labour and Employment Agency of the RM.

⁴Members are representatives of international, civic associations and experts from governmental institutions: MoI-STHBIM, MLSP-NRM, US Embassy in RM, ICMPD, OSCE, IOM, UNHCR, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, AOWM, Regional Centre - MARRI, Civic Association "Open Gate -La Strada", Civic Association "For a happy childhood", Civic Association "Semper" and Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia.

⁵Chaired by an Advisor for protection and prevention of THB in MLSP-NRM, and members are representatives of: MoI -STHBIM, CBAM-MoI, US Embassy in Skopje; ICMPD, OSCE, IOM, Civic Association "Open Gate -La Strada", Civic Association "For a Happy Childhood", Civic Association "Equal Approach" as well as a Deputy Ombudsman who has the role of external member/observer.

⁶No 44-3128/1 of 4 July 2017 "Official Gazette of the RM", No. 84/2017

⁷Two meetings were held during 2017 on February 15th and September 27th.

the IOM within the project *Building the national capacities in the area of asylum, migration and trafficking in human beings* funded by the European Union, a comprehensive analysis for the functioning of the NRM was conducted, whereby suitable suggestions for the promotion thereof were provided.

In order to decentralise the National Commission, in 2013 Local Commissions for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration were formed in Bitola and Tetovo, and then in 2014 in Štip. Additionally, in 2016 the Commission took a decision to form three new Local Commissions in Prilep, Gevgelija and Veles. Simultaneously, due to the changes arising as a result of the local elections, the Commission submitted a request to the municipalities in which local commissions have already been formed to appoint chairpersons of Local Commissions and to revise the membership thereof.

1.2 LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

In order to address the remarks of GRETA and to align our legislation with Article 8 of the Directive 2011/36/EU in December 2018 the Criminal Code⁸ was supplemented with the **Principle of impunity of victims of trafficking in human beings**. This legal amendment explicitly states that a victim of THB forced to commit a criminal act or other punishable act while he or she was a victim, directly related to his or her condition of being a victim, shall not be punished. This provision was stipulated for a child – victim of trafficking in human beings as well. Also, in Article 418-a the punishment for the act referred to in paragraph (4) shall be shortened from at least eight to at least five years; and in Article 418-b the punishment for the criminal act referred to in paragraphs (3 and 5) shall be shortened from at least eight ten to at least five years;

In May 2018, the Law on Foreigners⁹ was adopted and it helped meet the recommendations of GRETA¹⁰ regarding the temporary residence permit for victims of trafficking in human beings, a recovery and reflection period and granting more rights to victims.

By amending and supplementing the **Law on Social Protection**¹¹ in March 2018 the mandate of the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings was broadened and accommodation of victims of sexual violence was allowed. Also, the *Rulebook on spatial norms and standards, equipment, professional staff and means necessary for establishing and starting work in the social work facility in the Centre for Victims of THB and sexual violence* was amended and supplemented. Thus, a shelter for accommodating the identified

⁸ Adopted by the Assembly of the RNM on December 31st 2018

⁹ Adopted 21.05.2018 by the Assembly of RM

¹⁰ Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)

¹¹ (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ No. 79/2009, 36/11, 51/11, 166/12, 15/13, 79/13, 164/13, 187/13, 38/14, 44/14, 16/14, 180/14, 33/15, 72/15, 104/15, 150/15, 173/15, 192/15, 30/16 163/17 and 51/18)

victims of these types of gender-based violence was provided and it was adapted to persons with special needs. Restricted use documents were drafted for the functioning of this Centre in line with the international standards for human rights, and these documents refer to the procedures and processes of referral, accommodation, stay, rules of conduct for the hired personnel, protection protocol etc.

In November 2018, the National Coordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, Magdalena Nestorovska, MA, together with the negotiating team from the Republic of North Macedonia had a working session with Mr. Mitar Đurašković, Head of the Office for Coordination of Activities for combatting THB and his negotiating team. The National Coordinator for Trafficking in Human Beings of the Republic of Serbia, in order to align the draft text of the **Cooperation Agreement in the area of Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings**. The initiative for concluding the Agreement originated from the National Commissions for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings of both countries and will result in improving the conditions for promotion and exchange of information between the competent authorities, as well as conducting joint projects and campaigns to deepen the cooperation in the area of combatting trafficking in human beings. Following the completion of the process of negotiations between the two countries signing of a Cooperation Agreement in the area of Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings between the Unit (Task Force) for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and THB of the RNM and the Permanent Task Force for Migrant Smuggling of the Republic of Serbia will follow, i.e. between the National Units (the Task Forces) of both countries, on prevention, promotion and exchange of information concerning migrant smuggling.

An initiative for signing an Agreement between the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Government of the Republic of Serbia was developed at the meeting, on cooperating in the area of combatting migrant smuggling.¹²

The National Commission with the support from International Organization for Migration (IOM)¹³ revised the **Standard Operating Procedures for the Treatment of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (SOPs)**. Two experts¹⁴ were hired for the drafting of the SOPs. The experts drafted the text of

¹² The Ministry of Interior has prepared a draft text of the Agreement and it has been submitted as a proposal to the Serbian side. The meeting was assisted by the International Organization for Migration – IOM Skopje within the regional project “Strengthening the capacities and the mechanisms for the Identification and Protection of Vulnerable Categories of Migrants from the countries in the Western Balkans” the Regional project is conducted in the 6 countries of the Western Balkans (Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo) and is financed by the US Department of State, Migration, Population and Refugees Bureau (PRM).

¹³ International Organization of Migration supported the revision of the SOPs for the treatment of victims of THB by its regional project *Strengthening the Fight against Human Trafficking during a Crisis in the Countries from the Western Balkans*.

¹⁴ prof. Verica S. Trajkova and Sanija Burageva

the SOPs by conducting interviews with separate groups and two validation workshops in cooperation with the members of the National Commission. The SOPs were then adopted by the National Commission and by the Government of the RNM¹⁵.

The Macedonian Young Lawyer's Association (MYLA) forms part of the Working Group working on the Draft **Law on Free Legal Aid (LFLA)** as of February 2018, and they have submitted their comments to the Political System and Community Relations Commission of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia. The comments on the Law *inter alia* refer to improvement of the approach to justice and legal aid to victims of trafficking in human beings, and there was a suggestion referring to Article 2 paragraph 1 where it should be precised that the Law regulates legal aid to children at risk and victims of criminal acts. Along these lines, Article 30 of the draft was also discussed in accordance with which the victims of criminal acts appearing as harmed individuals are left with no right to free legal aid in LFLA, and such right has not been stipulated in the LCP, as well. In its comments, MYLA highlighted the necessity of reducing the restrictive conditions for exercising the right to FLA and shorter deadlines referring to the treatment of victims of trafficking in human beings. Due to the many flaws of the text, following the public dispute in the Assembly, it has been returned for completion in the Ministry of Justice, so that the quality of the text could be improved and good-quality and efficient solutions would be adopted that would guarantee access to justice, and simultaneously would contribute to a more active inclusion of civic associations and lawyers in the provision of free legal aid. MYLA submitted its comments to the Commission for Defence and Security in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia for the new Draft Law on Foreigners in April 2018 whereby the application of this law was postponed for a year¹⁶. The comments referred to improving the legal protection for foreigners -victims of trafficking. MYLA submitted comments for the Draft Criminal Code in September 2018, regarding requalification of a criminal act – Unlawful deprivation of liberty and including a new paragraph in Article 140 in which it is stipulated that if the act has harmed a child or a victim of THB, a more severe punishment is supposed to be imposed to the perpetrator with a duration of at least four years. Comments have also been submitted in regard to the Draft Law on Social Protection in October 2018 and they refer to the right to social protection necessary to be exercised by the victims of THB, as laid down in Article 14 of the draft law including asylum seekers, persons who have been recognised the refugee status and persons under subsidiary protection, however there is no mention of the victims of trafficking in human beings as social assistance users, especially having in mind that their temporary residence in the Republic of North Macedonia is regulated in detail pursuant to Article 124 of the new Law on Foreigners¹⁷.

¹⁵ Adopted by the Government of RM at its hundred and second session held on the 13.11.2018

¹⁶ Official Gazette no. 97 from 28.05.2018

¹⁷ Official Gazette no. 97 of 28 May 2018

1.2 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

- In the period between 29-30 March 2018 in Tirana, Republic of Albania, a meeting was held on the occasion of initiating the project *Strengthening the provision of services and raising the awareness on the fight against trafficking in human beings in the Balkans – Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo*. The meeting was attended by the Deputy National Coordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, Svetlana Vlahović Dimanovska, MA. The aim of the meeting was introduction of the project, the roles, and the contributions in achieving the expected results as well as forming a Steering Committee tasked with monitoring the activities and developing a transnational cooperation mechanism.

- Upon invitation by the Special representative and OSCE Coordinator of the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings, the National Coordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, Magdalena Nestorovska, MA took part in the **18th Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference on the topic of: *Everyone has a role: How to make a difference together*** held on 23-24 April 2018 in Vienna, Austria. The aim of the Conference was promotion of the importance of creating partnerships for increasing the coherence of efforts in the fight against THB as well as strengthening the cooperation at a local, national, regional and international level.

- In the period between 22-23 May 2018, upon invitation by the Council of Europe, the National Coordinator, Nestorovska, MA and Deputy National Coordinator, Vlahović Dimanovska MA participated in the **Conference held on the occasion of 10th anniversary from the implementation of the Convention for Action against Trafficking in Human Beings: Impact and Challenges**” in in Strasbourg, France, as well as at the meeting of the National Coordinators for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings organised by the OSCE.

- In Sofia, an **International Forum on: Western Balkans and the European Union: National Systems for Combatting THB in southeast Europe in the context of the pre-accession process** was held from 31 May to 1 June 2018 and it was organised by the National Commission for Combatting THB of the Republic of Bulgaria together with the ICMPD. The Forum topic was attended by the Deputy National Coordinator Vlahović Dimanovska, MA. The subject matter of the Forum was along the lines of presenting the achieved progress of the Western Balkan countries in the area of Combatting THB and the level of having met the recommendations in line with the European Commission Directive 2011/36/EU.

- One of the objectives stipulated under the **2017-2020 National Strategy for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration** is

aligning the national legal framework with the international one, i.e. forming a Compensation *Fund for Victims of THB*. Upon initiative of the National Commission for Combatting THB and Illegal Migration on the 8 June 2018 in the Club of Members of Parliament in Skopje a **Workshop on the Exchange of Experiences on Exercising the Right to Compensation by the Victims of THB** was held. The Workshop was attended by representatives from the National Commission and the Secretariat, as well as by members of the Working Group tasked with Amending and Supplementing the Criminal Code of the Republic of Macedonia and by a Kosovo delegation experienced in drafting the model used in Kosovo for addressing this issue. The workshop allowed discussing about and defining the Macedonian model which would provide appropriate treatment of this vulnerable category of persons.

- Upon invitation by the Council of Europe a representative of the National Unit (Task Force) for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and THB participated in a **Multidisciplinary workshop on transnational cooperation in combatting trafficking in human beings**. The workshop was held on May 31st, 2018 in Belgrade, Serbia. The aim of the workshop was capacity building of relevant factors for successful transnational cooperation and information exchange between the responsible persons and the NGOs to provide safe return and reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings.

- In the period from 13 to 14 June, 2018 in Brussels, Belgium a meeting of **the EU Network of National Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms** was held which was presided by the Bulgarian presidency. A participant from the National Commission attended the meeting.

- Between 3 and 5 of October, 2018 in Sarajevo, B&H a **Workshop on Improving the National and Regional Capacities for Combatting THB including elements of extortion for committing crime in South East Europe** was held. The workshop was organised by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in Austria in cooperation with the National Commission for Combatting THB of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The workshop was attended by a representative of the National Commission and a representative of the National Unit (Task Force) for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and THB. The aim of the Workshop was raising the awareness for trafficking in human beings with elements of extortion for committing crime, as well as forming a set of specific actions for future activities.

- From 31 October to 2 November 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria, a Regional Workshop on ***Capacity building and Cooperation in Combatting THB committed by abuse of internet technology in South East Europe*** was held and attended by representatives of the National Commission. The objective of the Workshop was to raise the awareness on the link between THB and abuse of

digital technology, as well as finding specific ways for taking concrete measures.

- From November 15th to 16th, 2018 in London, United Kingdom, an **International Conference on: *Policy for Progress: Ending Female Genital Mutilations and Forced Marriages*** was held. The conference was organised by the Government of the United Kingdom and the Council of Europe, and it was attended by the National Coordinator, Nestoroska MA.

- Upon invitation by the Office of the EU Coordinator for Combatting THB, the Deputy National Coordinator, Vlahović Dimanovska, MA, participated in the **meeting of the EU Network of National Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms for Combatting THB**. The meeting was held from December 3rd to 4th, 2018 in Brussels, Belgium.

An MoI representative participated in the fifth annual meeting organised within the project *Support of the Sustainable Development of Cooperation among Border Police in South East Europe – BORDAIRPOL II*, held in Budva on 08 November 2018¹⁸.

The representatives of the **National Unit** within the MoI in the course of 2018 took part in several events - seminars, courses, study visits, meetings abroad:

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM on April 26th 2018) organised a regional meeting of National Coordinators for Combatting THB from the Western Balkan countries. The aim of the regional meeting was reviewing the efforts of the states from the Western Balkans in the fight against THB, protection of vulnerable categories of migrants and regional cooperation in the field of combatting THB.¹⁹

The National Commission, the OSCE Mission to Skopje and the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combatting THB with its headquarters in Vienna on March 28th 2018 organised a **Regional Workshop for Exchange of Experiences and Best Practices between the Western Balkan countries regarding the early identification and protection of victims of THB in mixed migration flows**. The workshop was attended by over 40 participants from the Western Balkan countries, including the National Coordinators, representatives of police authorities, social and migrant services, NGOs advocating a unified approach in the identification of victims amongst risk groups.

- A multidisciplinary **workshop on transnational cooperation in combatting THB**, organised by the Office of the Council of Europe was held in Belgrade, Serbia on May 31st, 2018. The Workshop included participants from the

¹⁸ The meeting was attended by representatives from four networks of MARRI in charge of border police, asylum networks, readmission and THB from Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. As beneficiaries in this project, participants from Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova were included as well.

¹⁹ The meeting was organised with the support from the regional project *Strengthening the Fight against THB during a crisis in the Western Balkan countries* funded by the Office for Monitoring and Combatting THB of the US Department of State in 6 Western Balkan countries.

National Unit (Task Force) for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and THB. The aim of the workshop was strengthening the mutual cooperation of the countries found on the Balkan route in order to identify cases of THB on the migrant routes.

Within the Prague Process (ICMPD) from November 27th to 29th, 2018 in Baku, Azerbaijan, a workshop was organised on the topic of Fight against THB, in order to enrich the knowledge on the phenomenon itself, as well as to develop effective political responses for victims and future prevention and identification. The workshop was attended by a representative of the National Unit (Task Force) and representatives from Azerbaijan, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Montenegro, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Belorussia, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia.

Within the project *Tackling THB along the migrant routes* implemented since 2016 by the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for combatting THB, in the period from December 10th to 14th, 2018, the fourth training session was held in the Centre for Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU) in Vicenza, Italy. Amongst 70 participants from all OSCE Member States, three representatives from the Republic of North Macedonia also participated. They had the opportunity to upgrade their knowledge and practical skills for combatting THB in mixed migration flows through a practical and interactive approach, via simulated scenarios.

The OSCE Mission organised a **study visit in Italy, in which two representatives of the National Unit (Task Force) took part**. The visit enabled the participants to become familiarised with the procedures and practices for taking action in the area of asylum and combatting THB and illegal migration in the EU Member States.

The Office of the Council of Europe organised a study visit in Finland²⁰, Helsinki in cooperation with the Regional Labour Inspectorate for South Finland.

In the course of 2018, **the Civic Association against violence and trafficking in human beings “Open Gate - La Strada”** participated in several international events, such as:

- 62nd Commission for the Status of Women in New York -
- OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting *Child trafficking – from prevention to protection*, where a panellist from the Association shared his experience about providing services for protection of child victims of THB;
- Regional event for the municipal response to the migrant movement and crisis situations in Sarajevo, organised by GIZ;
- International expert meeting – international platform for NGOs, dedicated to secure and appropriate return, fair treatment and early identification of victims of trafficking in Sofia;

²⁰ Between 3 and 5 July, the study visit was attended by 11 participants from the State Labour Inspectorate, the National Unit and the NRM.

- Regional Ministerial Conference in Belgrade “initiative for social dimension for EU integration”;
- Regional Social Academy organised by IRIS Network in Belgrade;
- Round Table *Providing Protection under conditions of migration* where the Association had its own address on the situation with the migrant crisis in the Republic of North Macedonia held in 2018 in Brussels.

In Skopje the association participated in and conducted: Workshop on *Improving the services and raising the awareness in the area of combatting THB in the Balkans, attended by participants from state institutions and NGOs from Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo*²¹; Creating Unified Standard Operating Procedures on Treatment of Victims of THB; *Multidisciplinary workshop on transnational cooperation on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings. Partners’ meeting*, with 18 civic Associations from Macedonia as part of the Network IRIS, which in the next four years will put their efforts into improving the social services for the vulnerable categories of citizens;

1.3 RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS DEDICATED TO THE FIGHT AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS AND MIGRANT SMUGGLING

The negotiating team of the Republic of North Macedonia headed by the Minister of Interior, Mr. Oliver Spasovski and the negotiating team of the European Union headed by Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos in 2018 signed with their initials the **Status Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the EU on operations conducted by the European Agency for Border and Coast Guard in the Republic of North Macedonia (FRONTEX Agreement)**. The Agreement allows implementation and cooperation with the EU and FRONTEX, pursuant to Regulation no. 2016/1624 from September 14th, 2016 of the European Border and Coast Guard, which gives mandate to FRONTEX for deployment of missions on the territory of countries that are not EU Member States.

In March 2018 in Brdo, Slovenia a **Cooperation Protocol on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings** was signed between the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Government of the Republic of Kosovo on cooperation in the area of combatting trafficking in human beings. Signatories of the Protocol are the National Coordinators for Combatting THB, i.e. for the

²¹ Financed by the USA, via J/TiP Programme. The workshop was attended by participants from the MLSP, the National Commission for Combatting THB and Illegal Migration, MFA (including consular and diplomatic personnel), MoI, Ministry of Justice, judges, public prosecutors, as well as representatives of the civil society, academic institutions and international organizations. The workshop was attended by foreign representatives and experts from public institutions and NGOs from the countries of destination of the Macedonian victims, from the countries of origin of the victims from abroad identified on the Macedonian soil and from other countries in order to share their best practices, for example: Albania, Bulgaria, Italy and Serbia;

Republic of North Macedonia – Magdalena Nestorovska, MA and for the Republic of Kosovo - Mr. Milan Radojević.²²

In July 2018 in Ohrid, Republic of North Macedonia, **an Agreement** was signed between the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Government of Montenegro on cooperation in the area of combatting trafficking in human beings. The agreement was signed by the Ministers of Interior, for the Republic of North Macedonia, Mr. Oliver Spasovski and for Montenegro, Mr. Mevludin Nuhodžić.²³

2. Prevention

2.1 IDENTIFYING THE REASONS FOR THE OCCURRENCE OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS AND ILLEGAL MIGRATION

Upon initiative of the National Commission, with the support of the IOM and the Council of Europe Office, the **Standard Operating Procedures for the Treatment of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings** were revised. An Expert Opinion was also drafted and it was presented to 30 representatives from the National Commission, Social Workers, the National Unit (Task Force) for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings and Civic Associations. After completion of the analysis²⁴, the document **Standard Operating Procedures for the Treatment of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings** was drafted and it was adopted by the Commission, and then by the **Government of the Republic of North Macedonia**.

In 2018, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) published the regional analytical report *Strengthening the fight against trafficking in human beings during a crisis in the Western Balkan countries*²⁵. The purpose of the analytical report was to identify structural gaps and challenges in identifying potential victims and victims of trafficking in mixed migration flows. The focus was on the vulnerability of migrants across the region in order to develop programmes and measures for capacity building and protection of vulnerable categories.

²² The protocol was initiated by the National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, and it was coordinated during negotiations between the two delegations that took place in November 2017.

²³ The agreement was initiated by the National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration and it was harmonised during negotiations between the two delegations (October 2017 in Skopje and December 2017 in Podgorica).

²⁴ The International Organization for Migration has supported the revision of the SOPs for the treatment of victims to trafficking through the regional project *Strengthening the fight against trafficking in human beings during the crisis in the Western Balkan countries*.

²⁵ The analytical report was prepared within the framework of the regional project *Strengthening the fight against trafficking in human beings during the crisis in the Western Balkan countries* funded by the US Department of State's Office for Monitoring and Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings. The report provides reviews of all 6 countries in the Western Balkans (Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The OSCE Mission also assisted in drafting **educational materials - Manual and Practical Handbook for Protecting Students from Trafficking in Human Beings (in Macedonian and Albanian)**, which are intended for use in the educational system. The material was originally developed by UNITAS Foundation Serbia and it was fully adapted to our applicable legislation, procedures and institutional framework, approved by the Development Bureau / MES.

In the course of 2018, ICMPD continued with the implementation of the *Study on Trafficking Resilience and Vulnerability on Route to Europe (STRIVE)*.²⁶ The main objective of the project was to provide information on the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings in the context of illegal migration routes in Europe, as well as determining which refugee/migrant categories are more vulnerable and which are more resistant to the risks of trafficking in human beings. The aim of the research is to plan activities for preventing trafficking in human beings along migratory routes, more effectively identifying and protecting victims, as well as prosecuting perpetrators. The research phase in all the countries participating in the project ended in October 2018. Two research workshops were held and the findings were presented for the first time at a workshop for collecting, analysing and disseminating information related to migration, which took place on October 2nd, 2018 in Skopje, within the framework of the Prague Process. The research findings have been incorporated in a final study that was officially presented in March 2019 at a conference in Athens.

In the framework of the Presidency of Bulgaria with the European Union (EU) in the first half of 2018, ICMPD prepared a **non-paper** aimed at serving as a compass for defining future EU guidelines/engagements in activities related to the fight against human trafficking in the Western Balkan countries.²⁷ The non-paper contains information from the European Commission (EC) Progress Reports published on April 17th, 2018 for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, and also takes into account the recommendations for these countries given by GRETA. The findings of the research under the ICMPD project *Trafficking along Migration Routes to Europe - Bridging the gap between Migration, Asylum and Anti-Trafficking* are also contained in the document.

The Civic Association Open Gate-La Strada in the reporting period prepared: A Manual for Civic Associations, which aims to monitor the activities

²⁶ It is a research project covering the following countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia and Serbia (transit and first EU countries along the Western Balkan route), Germany (one of the most important destination countries), and Italy (country of first arrival in the EU) along the central Mediterranean route.

²⁷ The document is based on a survey conducted by ICMPD, the National Commission for the Fight against Human Trafficking in Bulgaria and the coordinators for combatting trafficking in human beings from the Western Balkan region. The document was presented and discussed at the international forum "Western Balkans and the European Union: Systems to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in Southeast Europe in the Context of the Accession Process", held on 31 May-1 June in Sofia, Bulgaria.

for prevention, identification, protection, justice and coordination of child victims of violence; Report on the role of the Ombudsman in protecting the rights of child victims, aimed at identifying the needs of the Ombudsman in terms of objective monitoring and reporting on the situation of violence against children and appropriate action; Report of NGOs on violence against children. The report primarily aims to paint a picture of the situation of violence against children in the country through the perspective of civic associations and their efforts to protect children who are victims.

At the same time, it distributed a variety of information, educational and preventive materials aiming at educating professionals, raising public awareness, preventing and promoting the SOS line such as: Migrant Referral System/ Provision of Social Services; Manual for Civic Associations: Monitoring Prevention, Identification, Protection, Justice and Coordination Activities for Child Victims of violence; Report on the role of the Ombudsman in protecting the rights of child victims; 2017 Report of Civic Associations on Violence against Children; Brochure- Coffee conversations with the refugees; Leaflet - Victims of trafficking in human beings: Learn about your rights and the support you can expect; Leaflet - Victims of trafficking in human beings: Right to Legal Aid and Compensation of damage; Leaflet – Services offered by this associations, Bags and Posters with the Slogan - Handle with care, as well as notebooks with the SOS line number.

The national expert of the civic association *For a Happy Childhood* drafted: a *Training Programme for the National Unit (Task Force) for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and THB*, as well as *Indicators for children who are victims of THB intended to be used by teachers and school counselling services, supported by the Council of Europe*.

The National Commission, with the support from the **Council of Europe Office**, designed a THB information leaflet which was printed and distributed to target groups. Also, the **Council of Europe Office** published the 2017 GRETA Report, translated into Macedonian and Albanian.

The National Commission supported the regional project *Children on the Move to Priština-Skopje-Tirana supported by the OSCE Mission to Kosovo*, by distributing questionnaires to relevant national institutions and entities, making an active contribution to the research.

The Local Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration of the Municipality of Gevgelija in accordance with the Annual Action Plan and in line with the priorities and programme commitments of the National Commission, in 2018 carried out a number of activities aimed at prevention, education and public awareness raising for recognising the dangers of becoming a potential victim of THB.

In February, in order to cooperate with the institutions at local level and to assess the situation at local level, questionnaires were prepared for each institution accordingly, whereby:

- The MLSP-ISWC Gevgelija provided data on the situation of dysfunctional and existentially endangered families in the municipality, as environments wherefrom victims of THB can be recruited;
- From MoI-PS Gevgelija and RC for BA - SOUTH, juvenile delinquency data, number of detected acts of THB and migrant smuggling crimes, number of detected illegal daily crossings
- MES – data on children who have not attended school for a longer period of time and reasons for absence
- Labour inspection – detecting cases of child labour or forced labour, unreported employment of foreigners;
- MH – during preventive regular physical examinations of pupils, whether there are cases of abused or neglected children and their number, as well as other detected cases that might give a hint for potential victims of trafficking in human beings;
- Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia; – what is the number of fit for work people who are looking for employment abroad etc.

The obtained data have been analysed by the Local Commission in order to detect the risk group and a target group to which the work of the commission should especially be directed.

- In March/April, the Local Commission in cooperation with the psychological-pedagogical service of the Secondary Municipal School *Josif Josifovski* from Gevgelija drafted questionnaires on the topic *Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration* where 57 students of I and II year took part. Evaluation of the responses was conducted in order to establish the knowledge of this topic among children at the age of 14 to 16.
- In June the Local Commission in cooperation with the NGO *Poddržka (Support)* and the *Civil Association Centre for Sustainable Development* and the secondary school from Gevgelija handed over leaflets to passengers at the Bogorodica Border Crossing with special topics on illegal migration.
- On the occasion of 30 July, *World Day against Trafficking in Persons*, for the purposes of commemoration of all the victims of trafficking in human beings, representatives from the Local Commission for Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration from Gevgelija visited the TTC - Temporary Transit Centre for Migrants *Vinojug*, where they were informed by the services working in the TTC (Border Police, Red Cross, MLSP, IOM, La Strada, CMC) on the current situation in terms of the number of migrants that are currently present and the assistance provided to them in order to facilitate their stay in the TTC. Furthermore, a meeting was held with those migrants from Iraq, who have voluntarily expressed their willingness to return to their home country. A return

procedure has already been initiated by the competent services and international organisations for their return to their country of origin.

Also the Local Commission donated food, personal hygiene products and clothes for the migrants.

- On the occasion of 18 October – EU Anti-Trafficking Day, the Local Commission of the municipality of Gevgelija in cooperation with the Red Cross – Gevgelija and the Primary Municipal School *Krste Misirkov* of Gevgelija, held educational training, presented a short film and conducted testing of 9th grade pupils (children at the age of 13-14) on the topic of *Recognising Dangers of Becoming Potential Victim of Trafficking in Human Beings*.
- Between 2 and 9 December, on the occasion of celebration of the Anti-Trafficking Week, the Local Commission in cooperation with all municipal schools in Gevgelija (four primary and one secondary school) held several activities, such as:
 - leaflets on the topic of *Trafficking in Human Beings for the purposes of Identifying and Reporting Potential Human Trafficking Victims*, as well as the danger that exists and should be recognized as such were handed over to all pupils at the age between 11 and 18,
 - Jerseys/t-shirts with the logo STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING were distributed to women's basketball team of the SMS "Josif Josifovski" which they wore at the regional school basketball matches,
 - A lecture was held at the SMS *Vlado Kantardiev* in Gevgelija on the topic of *Recognise and Report Danger of Trafficking in Human Beings*, getting acquainted with the basic forms of recruitment of the victims and types of their exploitation,
 - In November, the annual 2019 Local Commission Work Plan was drafted, as well as the program budget for 2019, which were adopted in December 2018 at the session of the Council of the Municipality of Gevgelija, thus completely supporting the work of this commission in the future period.

2.2 BUILDING THE CAPACITIES AND CONDUCTING PREVENTIVE ACTIVITIES

In 2018 in order to build the capacities and to establish the mechanisms for identification and protection of vulnerable groups, fight against trafficking in human beings and illegal migration, the MLSP conducted:

- Two trainings of 54 students at the Institute for Social Work and Social Policy for the purposes of building staff that will be part of the system dealing with the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings in the future and will be ready to continue contributing in practice.

- Two two-day advanced training for 60 social workers²⁸ on the topic: of *Trafficking in Human Beings – Direct Work with THB Victims, Conducting Interviews, and Procedures for Providing Services to THB Victims.*

In the reference period **the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors Pavel Šatev** conducted one consultation on the topic: Trafficking in Human Beings/Latest Forms/Labour Exploitation. The consultation was intended for judges from criminal departments and public prosecutors from all appellate areas, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Interior. The consultation was attended by a total of 15 participants, 7 of which were judges, 5 were public prosecutors, 2 were judge's associates and 1 public prosecutor's associate.

In 2018 for the purposes of raising awareness of the young population for the trafficking in human beings, **the Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia**, via the Youth Clubs of the Red Cross, conducted a total of 105 educational and preventive workshops which included 2720 pupils from primary and secondary schools in Macedonia.

The OSCE Mission in cooperation with the National Commission and MLSP organised a **specialised training for the members of the mobile teams** which was held on 13 and 14 June. The training was a continuation of the trainings conducted by the IOM and it contributed to the promotion of the professional capacities and further deepening of the practical skills and knowledge in the area of dealing with THB victims and child victims, as well as coordination and cooperation among the mobile teams and competent authorities. Between 8 and 10 October 2018, **a three-day workshop** was held on the topic of *Promotion of the Status, Role and Sustainability of the Mobile Teams for Dealing with Vulnerable Persons and THB Victims.* The workshop was attended by approximately 40 professionals and decision and policy makers, especially social workers, police, civic sector and other stakeholders discussing concrete solutions for providing long-term sustainability of the mobile teams and proposing modalities for their integration in the existing institutional framework.

In 2018, **the OSCE Mission technically and institutionally supported the MoI in the field of fight against THB and illegal migration, and especially the National Unit (the Task Force).** For that purpose, **desktop computers** were donated to all inspectors of the Task Force central office, as well as in the field offices of the SIA in the country. It was also agreed to provide office equipment for smooth functioning of the external office of SIA Tetovo. The Mission, in cooperation with the Training Centre of MoI, **conducted basic training of the inspectors in the Task Force** where basic tools and work modules were presented, as well as contemporary trends and forms of this type of organised crime and international practices for its suppression.

Also, **the OSCE Mission supported the organisation of four round tables** with all relevant state institutions and entities and international partners²⁹ with

²⁸ The trainings were held by the international experts Danijela Bajraktarović and Lidija Milanović from Serbia

the purpose of drafting a comprehensive **National Plan for Management of Potentially Large Influx of Migrants**. The last workshop was held on 11 and 12 of December where the draft version of the plan was adopted. The Working Group report was submitted to the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. During a separate session of the Government, concerning the plan development, a conclusion was made that the Crisis Management Centre should form a working group composed of the involved institutions for adoption of a final version of the plan.

It also contributed to building of the capacities for implementation of preventive activities in the education area via **two trainings of future trainers, one involving 20 representatives of Associations, and the other one involving 15 secondary schools teachers from 10 secondary schools**. Subsequently, the teachers held training and shared the gained knowledge with their colleagues – teachers in certain secondary schools. These activities will also continue in 2019, contributing to the prevention, recognition and identification of potential victims of child trafficking among youth and promoting the awareness of this phenomenon.

In 2018, within the frames of its project activities, **IOM Skopje** organised many national and regional trainings for its partners³⁰. The trainings were held by national and international experts for the purpose of building the capacities of the stakeholders.

- On 23 March, training on the topic of *Smuggling of Migrants, Modus Operandi and Indicators for Smuggling of Migrants in the Western Balkans* was held for 20 border police officers³¹. The training covered the following topics: particularities of the irregular migration in the Southeast Europe, smuggling of migrants and modus operandi, cooperation and information sharing and challenges in the fight against smuggling of migrants. In May within the frames of the same project trilateral two-day training was held for the participants from Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania on the topic of *Cultural Competence: Understanding, Awareness and Sensibility for the Migrant Population*. The training was held in Ohrid and was intended for public prosecutors and judges who work in the area of THB and smuggling of migrants.

- In order to strengthen the inter-institutional cooperation and coordination in the fight against THB and coordination in the fight against THB and smuggling of migrants, a coordination workshop³² was held on 6 June in

²⁹ MoI, MLSP, ME, MH, RCM, IOM, UNHCR. Representatives of the European Asylum Support Office will also be included in the workshop, as well as representatives of national NGOs.

³⁰ state institutions, agencies, civil associations and international organisations which are directly involved in the migration flows, fight against trafficking in human beings, prevention of smuggling and illegal migration, protection of vulnerable categories of foreigners, unaccompanied foreign children and potential THB victims

³¹ The training was held within the frames of the regional project *Strengthening Capacities and Mechanisms for Protection and Identification of Vulnerable Categories – Migrants in the Western Balkan Countries – Phase II* funded by the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migrations within the United States Department of States

³² With representatives of the National Unit for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human beings, Public Prosecutors' Office for Prosecution of Organised Crime and Corruption, Ministry of Interior,

Berovo for the purposes of identifying challenges in the process of identification and referral of potential victims and THB victims, new modi operandi in THB and smuggling of migrants and case analyses.

- In May and June, two two-day regional workshops were held for members of NGOs within the frames of the regional project **Strengthening the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings during Crisis in the Western Balkan Countries**³³. The objective of the trainings was to build the capacities of the participants from the nongovernmental sector in the identification, referral and protection of vulnerable categories of migrants, potential THB victims and THB victims and unaccompanied foreign children among mixed migration flows. Within the frames of the same project, one-day workshop was organised in Skopje in June for 34 permanent members of the National Unit (Task Force) for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings and social workers from the Social Work Centres in Skopje and Kumanovo. The workshop was aimed at determining the *modules of the Handbook for Trafficking in Human Beings* drafted by IOM for the needs of the Training Centre of the Mol.

- **IOM Skopje** in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy organised 4 two-day trainings³⁴ for strengthening the capacities in the fight against THB for 103 persons, of which 49 professionals from 25 centres for social work.

- In the period February – June 2018, IOM³⁵ in cooperation with Mol organized 9 two-day trainings for 217 border police officers on several topics including THB, smuggling of migrants, protection of special vulnerable categories – foreigners, unaccompanied minors, etc.

In 2018 **UNHCR** continued giving its support for the maintenance of the website of the Commission for the purposes of better availability of information, as well as promoting activities, public education and raising awareness in the area of THB and illegal migration. It also provided continuous support to the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the area of implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures for dealing with Unaccompanied Foreign Children and Standard Operating Procedures for Dealing with Vulnerable Categories of Foreigners. In addition, support was provided for the following activities:

- Support of the capacities of the MLSP in coordinating activities related to the processing and handling of cases of vulnerable categories of

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Centre for Social Work Skopje, Bitola and Tetovo and NGOs working in field of THB

³³ The regional project is implemented in 6 Western Balkan countries (North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina), financed by the U. S. Department of States for monitoring and fight against THB.

³⁴ In November and December 2018 within the frames of the project *Strengthening National Capacities in the Area of Asylum, Migration and Trafficking in Human Beings* “supported by the European Union.

³⁵ Within the frames of the project *Special Measure for Support of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to Manage Its South Border in the context of European Migrant Crisis* financed by the European Union and implemented by the IOM

refugees/migrants and asylum seekers (January - May 2018) through the implementation partner *Open Gate – La Strada*;

- Support to professional staff (1 person) in a shelter for (since May 2018) - partner *Open gate – La Strada*;
- Psychosocial support to refugees/migrants and asylum seekers, potential THB victims and THB victims – interpreters (1 Arabic and 1 Farsi);
- Providing medical interventions in life-threatening situations and limited humanitarian aid to refugees and persons in need of humanitarian aid and transiting at different locations.

The Council of Europe Programme Office in Skopje through the project *EU/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility*, with the support of the National Commission and in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and State Labour Inspectorate conducted:

- One multidisciplinary workshop for trafficking in human beings³⁶. The workshops were attended by approximately 90% of the labour inspectors from the country who have built capacity for detection and preliminary identification of THB victims, as well as support to victims and their referral;
- Round table was held³⁷ on the topic *Cooperation with the Private Sector, Labour Unions and NGOs for Suppression of Labour Exploitation* attended by 41 participants. The awareness raising and the mutual cooperation among state and private stakeholders was aimed at suppressing THB for labour exploitation was discussed at the round table.
- 5 focus groups with educational staff from primary and secondary schools were organised³⁸ for the preparation of Indicators for *Child Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings for the Teachers and Professional Services*.
- 1 multidisciplinary workshop³⁹ for the *Transnational Referral Mechanism* was attended by 40 participants. In February 2018, in cooperation with the NGO *Young Lawyers*, **training for 25 lawyers and representatives of the NGO sector** was organised for criminal, civil and enforcement proceedings, as well as the procedure before the European Court regarding the request for compensation of damages. The participants took part at previous THB training organised by the OSCE. They are assigned to a NRM legal aid roster.
- In December, training was organised **for financial investigators, financial police, representatives of the Primary Court Skopje 1 and Public Prosecutor's Office and the Agency for Management of Seized and Confiscated Property** on the topic of efficient financial investigations,

³⁶21-22.3.2018 in Mavrovo attended by 44 representatives of the Labour Inspectorate, MoI – mobile teams and social workers.

³⁷ 9 May 2018, Skopje with representatives of the economic chambers, private sector, labour unions, NGOs, Labour Inspectorate, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and National Commission Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings, as well as experts from Denmark and Bulgaria

³⁸ On 18.11-13.12.2018, attended by 35 participants

³⁹ 20 June 2018, Skopje attended by representatives of the National Commission Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings, social workers, National Unit for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings, MFA, NGOs, national and foreign experts (Italy, Bulgaria, Albania and Serbia)

detection of proceeds of crime, confiscation and management of property (a total of 42 participants) in accordance with the GRETA recommendation through more efficient financial investigations, detection of proceeds of crime and confiscation in order to provide funds for compensation of the victims.

- In the field of transnational cooperation, 2 international workshops were held attended by representatives from Serbia, Netherlands, Finland, Italy, Albania, Bulgaria and Moldova, as well as training for diplomatic missions and consular posts on the topic of preliminary identification of potential victims for which indicators have been prepared.

- One multidisciplinary training⁴⁰ for *Identification and Referral of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings via diplomatic missions and consular posts*, attended by 27 representatives. The training was organised in accordance with the SOPs for diplomatic missions and consular posts and MoI, as well as via the contacts established/strengthened through the activities organised for this purpose. Also, leaflets were prepared which were intended for the diplomatic missions and consular posts in order to inform them in cases of dealing with potential THB victims.

- One multidisciplinary workshop⁴¹ for *Improved Approach to the Compensation of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings and Detection of Proceeds of Crime*. The workshop was attended by 42 representatives who, besides with the national expert, had the opportunity to become familiarised with the good practices in the Netherlands and Italy. The training for financial investigations and tracing of proceeds of crime, in addition to the strengthening of the inter-institutional cooperation, enabled capacities building of the participants directly dealing with cases through explanation of the national legal framework and transfer of knowledge and good practices from the Netherlands and Italy.

- Training for lawyers and representatives of NGOs and Macedonian Young Lawyers Association⁴² who directly provide free legal aid. The training was attended by 25 persons who got familiar with the procedures for compensation of damages in criminal, civil and execution procedure, as well as the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

- One multidisciplinary training for THB for labour exploitation⁴³ attended by 44 participants, whereby representatives of the MoI and NRM gave presentations together with a foreign and national consultant.

⁴⁰ 12 November 2018, Skopje attended by representatives from MFA, MoI – mobile teams, NGOs. Representatives of MoI, NRM and NGO Open Gate held presentations together with foreign and domestic consultant.

⁴¹ (3-4 December 2018, Mavrovo) from MoI, PPO, Skopje 1, Financial Police, PRO, lawyers, Agency for Management of Seized and Confiscated Property and NGO.

⁴² 15 February 2018, Skopje organised in cooperation with NGO and Macedonian Bar Association

⁴³ 25-26 September 2018 in Struga from the State Labour Inspectorate, State Market Inspectorate, Public Revenue Office, State Inspectorate for Construction and Urban Planning – Shuto Orizari and Inspection Council.

Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) through the *USAID project for protection of human rights of refugees and migrants*, within the frames of the first component - conducted trainings⁴⁴ for representatives of different organisations referring to the application of four Standard Operating Procedures⁴⁵ focusing on the treatment and actions of the field workers to the refugees and irregular migrants. In addition to other institutions, the trainings also included representatives of the National Unit for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings and representatives of the mobile teams working with THB victims and vulnerable categories of persons. In detail, in 2017 and 2018, 12 trainings were held, three of which referred to the application of the SOP for dealing with THB victims.

The Citizens Association “Open Gate – La Strada” provided education to professionals of different profiles in order to build the capacities of the competent institutions. In this regard, CS “Open Gate” provided its expertise at trainings directly organised by the organisation or participated as trainer at trainings organized by other organizations and institutions such as:

-*Training for Compensation of THB Victims*” targeting representatives of the Financial Police Office, judges, public prosecutors, Agency for Management of Seized and Confiscated Property, Unit for Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings;

- Three-day training for trainers *Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings/Children* intended for professors and vocational staff in secondary schools in North Macedonia;

- *Training for Smuggling of Migrants* intended for judges and public prosecutors;

- *Training for Trafficking in Human Beings* intended for field workers;

- *Training for Trafficking in Human Beings* intended for representatives of diplomatic missions and consular posts.

- Three trainings for police officers covering the following topics: identification of vulnerable groups with special emphasis on THB victims; Standard Operating Procedures for work with vulnerable categories of migrants; Indicators for identification of THB victims and unaccompanied children;

- Two-day training for 25 operators on the topic of *Efficient Assistance and Referral of the Users of SOS services*;

- Two-day training intended for 26 professionals on the topic of *Strengthening the Capacities of Working with Victims Experts*.

⁴⁴ The first training was conducted in the period 05-07 September 2017 in Ohrid, the second in the period 01-03 December 2017 in Ohrid, the third was conducted in the period 17-19 December 2018 in hotel Bistra in Mavrovo . In detail, the trainings were attended by representatives of the Crisis Management Centre, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Health, Centres for Social Work, representatives of the Special Unit for Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants (Task Force), representatives of the mobile teams for fight against trafficking in human beings, as well as representatives of international and national NGOs.

⁴⁵ SOPs for Dealing with Unaccompanied Minors,
SOPs for Dealing with Vulnerable Categories of Persons,
SOPs for Dealing with Victims of Gender-Based Violence,
SOPs for Dealing with THB Victims.

In addition to the trainings organised for the purposes of strengthening the capacities of the competent institutions the Citizens' Association "Open Gate – La Strada" organized:

- Workshop for citizens' associations⁴⁶ on the topic of *Development of a System for Collecting Data and Monitoring the Situation of Violence against Children*.
- Workshop with citizens associations on the topic of *Strategy for Advocacy of Public Policies for Protection of Children – Victims of Violence*⁴⁷. The purpose of the workshop was confirmation of the monitoring report and developing advocacy strategy.
- Two-day training on the topic of *Effective Assistance and Guidance of SOS Hotline callers*⁴⁸. The training was intended for 4 lines SOS operators⁴⁹ and 25 operators increased their knowledge and capacities for advising in the event of trafficking in human beings, drug abuse, violence against children and domestic violence, as well as referral of clients for the most needed services.
- Two-day training *Strengthening the Professional Capacities of Working with Victims Experts*⁵⁰ attended by 26 professionals, psychologists, social workers, pedagogues, service providers for providing support, advising and referral of victims.
- Two-day trainings for application of *Unified Standard Operating Procedures for Cross-Border Coordination and Cooperation for Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, with Special Emphasis on Children*⁵¹ attended by social workers and members of the National Unit (Task Force) for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings from MoI, who were trained how to apply unified SOPs in cross-border cases of trafficking in human beings.
- Grants awarded via the project *Strategic Partnership for Changes*⁵² with the financial support from EU and 10 citizens' organizations from different regions in the country that will implement their projects with the support from *Open Gate – La Strada*.
- National Platform⁵³ as part of the project *Safe and Proper Return, Fair Treatment and Early Identification of THB Victims* attended by 35 representatives from institutions, international and citizens' organizations both from the country and EU.
- Two trainings for early identification of THB victims from third countries and a training for safe future, safe return, involving 40 field professionals from

⁴⁶ 30 January - 1 February 2018 attended by 27 participants from 12 NGOs.

⁴⁷ 1 June 2018 attended by 15 representatives of citizens' organizations who agreed on the contents of the Plan for Mutual Representations and Declaration for Platform of Citizens' Associations.

⁴⁸ 13 and 14 June 2018 attended by 25 operators

⁴⁹ SOS hotline for THB victims, SOS hotline for drug abusers, SOS hotline for children and adolescents, and SOS hotline for victims of domestic violence and additionally interested parties who applied for the open call

⁵⁰ 26-27 April 2018

⁵¹ 6-7 December 2018

⁵² 24.12.2018, through these grants citizens' associations will advocate and conduct independent and objective monitoring and investigation, policy development and will influence public decision-making processes.

⁵³ National Platforms were conducted in all four countries Netherlands, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Hungary.

North Macedonia and Bulgaria who could come into contact with potential THB victims from third countries.

In addition, the following documents were prepared and published within the frames of the project: *Handbook on Training for Early Identification and Safe Future, Safe Return of THB Victims* from third countries; *FIELD TESTIMONIALS Safe and Adequate Return, Fair Treatment and Early Identification of THB Victims from Third Countries*.

Citizens' Association For a Happy Childhood conducted training for **observation of children on street**. The training was held at the Faculty of Philosophy in February and March 2018 and included 30 students. During the training 30 observations were conducted and 71 children were found on the street.

The Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia continuously conducts activities for building the capacities of the national society for providing adequate prevention of THB among the young population. In this sense two representatives from the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia participated on a Workshop on the topic of *Trafficking in Human Beings with an Emphasis on the Migrants* that was held in the period from 3 to 6 July, in Ankara, Republic of Turkey⁵⁴. New *Handbook on Trafficking in Human Beings* was prepared and elaborated at this workshop for the purposes of unification of the work of the national societies in the implementation of the preventive programmes. Following this workshop, the Red Cross received support for the implementation of the project on the topic *Prevention against Trafficking in Human Beings in the context of Migrations*. Within the framework of the project, from 13 to 15 September a workshop on training of peer educators was conducted on this topic and informative and educational leaflets were prepared and published. Twenty three young volunteers from 11 municipal organisations of the Red Cross were trained, as well as representatives of the mobile teams in Lipkovo and Vinograd. The training was attended by a representative of the Red Cross of Serbia who shared his experiences and tools in the work with young persons for the purpose of prevention against THB. A total of 210 representatives from local self-government units and schools were included in the field workshops, as well as 844 pupils from primary and secondary schools.

2.3 RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

In 2018, the **SOS hotline for trafficking in human beings** of the Citizens Association *Open Gate – La Strada* continued to operate, with telephone operators providing information, assistance, support and guidance every day of the week from 08-20 h, 7 days a week.

In the period January – December 2018, **306** callers (181 women, 125 men) were registered on the SOS hotline in order to obtain information,

⁵⁴ With the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and Red Crescent

emotional and psycho-social support and assistance. Most of the calls, that is, 189 of them, were of informative/preventive nature.

- **EU Anti-Trafficking Day (18 October)**

The EU Day was marked at the EU Info Centre by holding a press-conference and presenting the start of the Campaign for Raising the Awareness of Vulnerable Communities on the Dangers Related to the Trafficking in Human Beings with Special Emphasis on the THB for Sexual and Labour Exploitation and Forced Child Marriage as a Risk of Child Trafficking. The campaign was conducted within the frames of the project *Strengthening the National Capacities in the Area of Asylum, Migration and Trafficking in Human Beings* financed by the European Union – implemented by IOM in cooperation with Mol and MLSP. The press-conference was attended by representatives of all stakeholders in the fight against trafficking in human beings and illegal migration, members of the **National Commission and the Secretariat, citizens’ association** and international organizations, while official addresses were given by high representatives from the competent institutions and organisations such as **Mr. Nicola Bertolini** – Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation, **Ms Magdalena Nestorovska** - State Secretary at the Ministry of Interior and National Coordinator of the national Commission Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, **Ms Jovana Trenčevska** – State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and **Ms Sonja Božinovska Petruševska** – Head of the Office of the International Organization for Migrations – IOM Skopje.

As part of this activity on the occasion of EU Anti-Trafficking Day a workshop was held, i.e. the first focus group for which promotional merchandise was prepared and distributed.

On the occasion of 18 October, EU Anti-Trafficking Day, **the Citizens’ Association *For a Happy Childhood*** conducted **basic training on THB** at the Faculty of Philosophy which included 80 students from 4 institutes of the Faculty of Philosophy. As part of the celebration of the EU Day two focus groups for prevention of THB were organized covering 15 students who use the *Work and Travel Programme* and travel abroad for the purposes of prevention of economic exploitation.

This year also, **the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia**, as part of the Secretariat of the National Commission Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, organized workshops/preventive lectures for peer education in primary and secondary schools conducted through the Red Cross of the City of Skopje and municipal organizations of the Red Cross⁵⁵. The objective of the preventive lectures was raising the awareness of the youth, identifying

⁵⁵ Centar, Karpoš, Kisela Voda, Ohrid, Veles, Prilep, Kruševo, Resen, Berovo, Radoviš, Gevgelija, Kavadarci, Kočani, Struga, Debar, Makedonski Brod, Tetovo, Demir Hisar, Gostivar

the ways in which young people can be involved in THB and their self-protection. Over 600 pupils from primary and secondary schools were covered with 25 educational workshops, as well as volunteers and employees of the Red Cross. On the occasion of the EU Day, the mobile team in Lipkovo within the Red Cross of the city of Skopje organized one-day march together with the local population from the villages of Lojane and Vaksince, as well as representatives from the MoI – Border Police North, NGO Legis and NGO Civic Development in order to raise the awareness against this kind of *modern slavery*. For the purposes of raising the awareness of the young population about THB, 105 educational preventive workshops were conducted which included a total of 2720 pupils from primary and secondary schools in North Macedonia.

- **Preventive Activities**

For the purposes of raising public awareness and education during the reporting period the institutions and organizations continuously implemented the planned activities in accordance with the NAP such as trainings, forum theatres, peer education etc.

The Ministry of Interior through the organisational units in the SIAs competent for prevention worked on the issues referring to the protection and prevention against trafficking in human beings by organising events such as:

- Platforms, educational lectures and discussions with pupils from the final grades (IX grade) and years (IV year) in primary and secondary schools. Representatives of the Parents Teachers Association were target group at certain thematic lectures (249 educational lectures and 28 platforms), and 13 platforms were held whose target group was composed of parents only;
- Meetings with citizens through Advisory Groups of Citizens (two thematic meetings and one platform with citizens from the Roma community);
- Taxi drivers from municipality of Kumanovo (one thematic meetings);
- Visits to the reception camp for migrants *Tabanovce* – communication with employees of the camp and persons accommodated there for the possibilities for abuse and trafficking in human beings while their accommodation in the camp or on the way to the camp.

In 2018, a total of 28 platforms (in primary and secondary schools in Kumanovo) and 249 educational lectures in primary and secondary schools were held, most of which were in the region of SIA Tetovo (217 one-hour lectures in all primary and secondary schools).⁵⁶ The platforms and educational lectures⁵⁷ were focused on identifying risks, protection and prevention against THB, as well as

⁵⁶In most of the cases municipal organizations of the Red Cross were included as partners in the implementation of the activity. Certain activities in the region of SIA Strumica and SIA Bitola were implemented in coordination with the Regional Centres for Border Affairs East and South. Representatives from relevant citizens' associations were also included in the educational lectures.

⁵⁷The activities with the pupils were implemented in the municipalities of Kumanovo, Kratovo, Kriva Palanka, Skopje and its municipalities, Tetovo, Gostivar, Strumica, Radoviš, Veles, Štip, Berovo, Delčevo, Vinica, Demir Hisar and Bitola.

informing the competent entities that may provide assistance and protection if needed.

Within the frames of the project *Safe Schools* safety teams in primary and secondary schools were established in the region of SIA Kumanovo, and 28 platforms for “prevention against THB and labour exploitation” within the frames of the activities for *Legal Socialization of Youth* were held.

The platforms with the parents were aimed at prevention of asocial behaviour of youth, care and protection (in the family and institutional), as well as the connection of the asocial behaviour and the risks for potential victims (children at risk).

Pupils from the Secondary Municipal School *Pero Nakov* in cooperation with the Division for Prevention Kumanovo prepared joint script and play *Not to Be Late* that connects the issue of child victims of family violence to the risk of becoming possible target to trafficking in human beings and addiction (alcohol and narcotics). At the same time Thematic Meetings with Citizens were conducted, i.e. 2 meetings of the Advisory Groups of Citizens at which, among other topics, environmental risks affecting the possibilities to become THB victims, as well as early identification and timely reporting of threats (in Kumanovo and Vinica) were covered. In one case in Kumanovo thematic meeting/platform was held with citizens of the Roma ethnic community as identified vulnerable group.

Citizens’ Association Open Gate – La Strada conducted three campaigns:

- *Act carefully*: travelling art installation set up in three towns in the North Macedonia⁵⁸. At least 300 citizens visited the art installation and watched the confessions of THB victims through the theatrical performance and the videos presented as part of the setting.

- *Open Gate Fact Notebook, Read, Learn, and Share* (on the occasion of the week for fight against THB from 2 to 9 December) was continuously shared on social media for seven days providing information for the public and preventive advises how to protect yourself from THB and where to report and ask for help.

- *HopeON* – in October 2018 we joined the regional social campaign for fight against human trafficking initiated by the NGO sector in the region. This campaign is used for regular dissemination of information and facts concerning human trafficking to the wide audience. As part of the campaign, various multimedia products are being developed and distributed through the social networks to the public.

As part of the programme for prevention and education, the Association organised the following:

⁵⁸ In Skopje, Bitola and Tetovo, the installation was followed by panel events. The campaign was conducted in cooperation with relevant institutions, international organizations and other citizens’ associations. Additionally, with the help of the media and media coverage, the message reached at least 500000 viewers and listeners.

- 10 workshops aimed at prevention⁵⁹, which targeted high school youth, encompassing 243 high school students and youth, SOS children's village and the children placed in group homes. The aim of the workshops was for the youth to become familiarised with the problem of human trafficking and to be informed on the various ways of protection and places to ask for help.
- 8 forum theatres in elementary schools⁶⁰, aimed at raising the awareness of human trafficking and improving the sensitivity towards the refugees/migrants and their immigration process and the difficulties they are facing. These theatres were attended by 284 pupils.
- 5 events of *Going for a Cup of Coffee with the Refugees*⁶¹ were organised in cooperation with the MYLA, and were aimed at raising the public awareness on the conditions of migrants and refugees in the Republic of Macedonia. A total of 90 persons took part; among them, there were representatives of various professions, NGOs, journalists, local self-government etc. The participants were familiarised with the life stories of refugees, and were thus able to walk in their shoes in order to break the prejudice and stereotypes that had been created previously, especially through the media.

The OSCE Mission to Skopje continued implementing the *Campaign for awareness raising of youth, students, teachers and vulnerable groups concerning the dangers and risks from exploitation and human trafficking/trafficking in children*⁶². In the course of 2018, this campaign was implemented in a total of 30 high and elementary schools across the country and a total of 600 students were part of it. As part of the campaign, the 30-minute educational film *Observers* was shown, which was followed by a discussion with students, teachers and professional services in schools for recognition of the risks of children trafficking.

At the same time, the OSCE drafted contents concerning the prevention and prompting of the citizens to report cases of human trafficking, especially migrant smuggling. The pilot campaign was released in the Regional Centre for Border Affairs – Skopje, and it will continue being implemented there in the future.

3. Support and Protection of Victims and Migrants

3.1. MECHANISMS OF IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL OF VICTIMS

In order to follow the recommendations foreseen in the governmental reform plan 3-6-9 of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as the National Strategy and the Action Plan for Fight against Human

⁵⁹ The workshops encompassed the following towns: Bitola, Skopje, Kavadarci, Delchevo and Kumanovo.

⁶⁰ In Skopje, Kavadarci, Demir Hisar, Strumica (Novo Selo and Vasilevo), Bitola and Kumanovo

⁶¹ These took place in Skopje, Bitola, Prilep and Kavadarci

⁶² The campaign shall be conducted between 2017-2020 with the assistance of the National Commission, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Association Open Gate/La Strada

Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (2017-2020) and in order to build the capacities for coping with this issue, during a governmental session on 17 November 2017, the Government considered and adopted the information for need of formation of a **National Unit (Task Force) for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking**⁶³. The National Unit (Task Force) shall be formed in order to build the national capacities and increase the efficiency of the police and the Public Prosecutor's Office for suppression of organised forms of migrant smuggling and human trafficking. The National Unit (Task Force) has been officially established through signing a **Memorandum on Cooperation in the Area of Suppression of Organised Forms of Migrant Smuggling, concluded between the Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Macedonia** on 3 January 2018. The unit was formed for the purposes of improvement of coordination and cooperation between the Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecution of Organised Crime and Corruption of the Republic of Macedonia for suppression of crimes related with migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

The National Unit (Task Force) is headed by a head appointed by the Public Prosecutor of the Republic of Macedonia from among the public prosecutors of the **Basic Public Prosecutor's Office** for prosecution of organised crime and corruption. The head of the National Unit (Task Force) is in charge of heading and directing the actions of the National Unit (Task Force) for detection of organised forms of migrant smuggling and human trafficking. In the event of absence of the head, the National Unit (Task Force) is headed by a deputy head, who is also appointed by the Public Prosecutor of the Republic of Macedonia from among the public prosecutors of **Basic Public Prosecutor's Office** for prosecution of organised crime and corruption.

The National Unit (Task Force) even has its own assistant head, who is at the same time head of the Unit for Suppression of Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling in the Ministry of Interior, who coordinates the activities from various organisational units of the MoI in the National Unit (Task Force).

There is a deputy assistant too, deputy assistant to the head, who helps coordinate the activities of the police officers from the Regional Centres of Border Affairs. Apart from heads of the National Unit (Task Force), the assistant head and his/her deputy, there are 14 police officers who work as permanent members at central level, and 16 police officers who are permanent members at local level (two in each Sector of Internal Affairs) or a total of 32 police officers, as well as focal points from the Regional Centres East, North, West, South, the

⁶³ The National Unit for Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking was formed in January 2018 for the purposes of building the national capacities and increasing the efficiency of police and prosecutors for suppression of organised forms of migrant smuggling and human trafficking. It is mandated for 3 years, with the possibility of extension.

Border Police Mobile Unit, from the special units (Unit of Rapid Deployment and Unit of Special Tasks), from the Alpha unit, Sector of Computer Crime and Digital Expertise, the Department of Criminal Police, the Sector of International Police Cooperation (Europol and Interpol), a total of 21 focal points. The MoI adopted a Decision for Appointing of an assistant-head, deputy assistant-head, permanent members and focal points from the MoI in the National Unit (Task Force) on the 13 February 2018.

The National Unit (Task Force) is funded from the allocated budgets of the Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as from international funds. Furthermore, the Unit has the possibility to cooperate with the remaining bodies of state administration in order to exchange information.

Aimed at building the national capacities for identification of victims/potential victims of human trafficking, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed in January 2018 between the MoI and the MLSP for formation of **Mobile teams⁶⁴ for identification of vulnerable categories, including victims of human trafficking⁶⁵** that would contribute to enhancing the cooperation between these two institutions in order to identify the vulnerable categories of persons, including victims of human trafficking. The mobile teams are composed of a social worker, police officer (from the Task Force) and a representative from the civil sector. These mobile teams are formed in five towns in the Republic of Macedonia: Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Bitola and Gevgelija. The total number of participants in mobile teams amounts to 33 (5 coordinators and 28 members). This multidepartmental approach significantly contributes to an improved coordination, expansion of the network of social workers in order to enable a proactive identification of victims of human trafficking.

The mobile teams operation is supported by the project *Building the National capacities in the Area of Asylum, Migrations and Human Trafficking* of the IOM, which was funded by the EU. As part of the project, in the months of February and March, a *Programme for Work of the Mobile Teams on Identification of Vulnerable Categories of Citizens, including Victims of Human Trafficking* was drafted. Furthermore, two two-day trainings were held for capacity building of the mobile teams members. The programme is drafted with an active participation of mobile team members and it was adopted by the two Ministries – the MLSP and MoI.

⁶⁴ The mobile teams are composed of a representative of the Social Work Centre, a police officer and a representative of a civil association. The goal of the mobile teams is improvement of identification through proactive action in detection and prevention of human trafficking. The mobile teams will work with vulnerable categories of citizens, including victims of human trafficking, identification of the supposed victim as a victim of human trafficking, initial referral and identity check, they will be involved in conducting early risk assessment, give information on the possibility of inclusion of the victim in a programme for assistance and support and similar.

⁶⁵ The mobile teams have become functional in March 2018 and will be active until the completion of the project in June 2019 with a possibility of institutionalisation of the teams. The mobile teams are composed of representatives of the MoI, MLSP and Civil Associations.

Between March and December 2018, the mobile teams initially contacted 390 persons, to whom they provided information and assistance (362 nationals of the RM and 28 foreign nationals)⁶⁶, 100 nationals of the RM, 4 foreign nationals (65 are female and 39 are male, out of the total number, 79 are children and 25 are adults) and 277 vulnerable categories of persons, with 169 of them being male (43%) and 221 female (57%).

In order to inform the vulnerable categories of persons on the field of the role and work of the mobile teams, an informational flyer was drafted in 6 languages (Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, English, Farsi and Arabic).

The work of the mobile teams and the support of the victims of human trafficking and the potential victims of human trafficking is additionally enhanced through the establishment of the **Fund of Direct Assistance**. Between March and December 2018⁶⁷, this Fund provided support to 40 persons, with 9 identified victims of human trafficking and 31 potential victims of human trafficking.

Furthermore, in order to enable access of the Mobile teams to all vulnerable categories on the field in the target municipalities and the surrounding places, 5 vehicles were donated as part of the EU project on the behalf of IOM (3 of MLSP and 2 of MoI).

3.2 IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL OF VICTIMS

In the Republic of Macedonia, the abuse of children through forced sexual exploitation and forced marriages are still the most common forms of human trafficking. In the course of 2018, there was a trend of increased identification. Namely, a total of **9 victims of human trafficking were identified**⁶⁸, **6 of them being children**. In terms of gender, they are all female, whereas in terms of nationality, 8 are nationals of the Republic of Macedonia, and 1 is a foreign female from the Republic of Albania.

The victims originate from the region of Skopje, the Northeast and the Polog region, i.e. the majority of them are victims of internal trafficking happening on the area of Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kumanovo, Berovo. The victims of human trafficking are female and the majority, i.e. 6 of them are victims of human trafficking for the purposes of forced sexual exploitation (along with begging, forced prostitution and forced committing of crimes), whereas 3 of them are victims of forced marriage (forced to begging and sexual exploitation).

All nine victims of human trafficking are located in the Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking and Victims of Sexual Violence and they have all been

⁶⁶ Among them, 9 are human trafficking victims, 104 are potential human trafficking victims

⁶⁷The support encompassed medical support (psychological, psychiatric, hospitalisation, dentist services and medicines), educational (online courses and training for promotion of professional skills), procurement of food and hygienic kits, clothes, therapeutic assistance (painting classes, pilates, video materials and workshops), activities for resocialisation etc.

⁶⁸MoI/NUSMSHT, MLSP/NRM and the mobile teams.

provided with assistance and protection. Assistance entails providing medical assistance (psychological, psychiatric, hospitalisation and medicines), education, food, hygienic materials, clothes and assistance for resocialisation (materials, pilates, taking photographs, video materials, walks, attending cinemas, etc.) or referral and connection with other institutions and organisations depending on their individual needs.

3.3 DIRECT ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION OF VICTIMS AND MIGRANTS

A psychologist and a social worker have been hired with the assistance of the IOM to provide assistance and support to victims of human trafficking in the Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking and Victims of Sexual Violence⁶⁹.

The civil association *Open Gate – La Strada* kept providing ongoing 24-hour functioning of the Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking and Victims of Sexual Violence (CVHTVSV) through enabling shift work of the expert team of *Open Gate – La Strada* at the Centre for the **9 institutionalised persons**.

Additionally, expert assistance and counselling was provided to 22 persons who were included in the programme for additional social work through activities for their reintegration in society. A standard package of services for meeting the basic needs was provided (food, clothes and hygienic kits) for all persons involved in the programme for psychosocial support.

Legal aid was provided for 6 persons involved in the programme for social support. A basic medical assistance kit was provided for 12 persons included in the programme, whereas for 8 persons were provided specialised checks and adequate medicines. Psychological and social counselling was provided for all 31 persons included in the programme, as well as for three Centre residents who re-enrolled to school. One Centre resident was even helped to enrol in a course for beauty therapist in order to facilitate her access to the labour market. She successfully completed the course.

The organisation continuously provided a standard set of services for meeting the basic needs, legal, medical assistance, psychological and social assistance and inclusion in the alternative educational process of female victims of THB/migrants and asylum seekers in the TC Tabanovce, TC Vojjug, the Centre for Asylum Seekers in Vizbegovo. In the course of 2018, the field teams of the association identified a total of **20 potential victims among migrants (10 male, 6 female and 4 children)**. Namely, signs of potential human trafficking were remarked among these persons and they were provided assistance by *Open Gate – La Strada*.

During the reporting period, the CA *For a Happy Childhood* provided psychological assistance and support of 3 child victims sheltered in the Centre of Human Trafficking Victims and Victims of Sexual Violence. A psychologist from the Association drafted two psychological reports on the conditions and

⁶⁹ As part of the project *Building the National Capacities in the Area of Asylum, Migrations and Human Trafficking*, which is funded by the European Union.

opinion of the type of protection of victims, which are drafted at the request of the MLSP.

3.3 LEGAL AID TO VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANTS

The civil association *Open Gate – La Strada* provided free legal aid and representation of 3 victims of human trafficking in various stages of the procedure for protection of their rights. In addition, legal aid was provided for three victims of human trafficking who had even before been represented in various parts of the procedure. The hired lawyer actively prepared the victims for participation in the judicial proceedings and provided funds for two judicial expertises by an expert (neuropsychiatrist).

A compensation procedure has been initiated for a Centre resident for whom a compensation verdict was passed in 2017. The procedure was initiated by an enforcement agent, who initiated enforcement proceedings for all 4 convicted persons. Some of the persons have property that might be used for charging the compensation for which the procedure is still ongoing.

The court provided legal aid for one Centre resident, and she was appointed a lawyer ex officio, who is to take care for her rights in the course of the procedure.

MYLA through their own representatives in the mobile teams provide legal aid and legal counselling of victims of human trafficking, potential victims and vulnerable categories of persons in terms of the conditions and the procedure for submission of request for free legal aid to the regional offices of the Ministry of Justice, where they have their own representatives.

Free legal aid is available for those persons who have applied for asylum, through ensuring the field presence of MYLA representatives, namely in Vinjug and Tabanovce. Furthermore, the UNHCR provides and assists the free legal aid on the whole territory of the RNM.

4. Budget

The activities for the fight against human trafficking were organised in partnership between the National Commission and the institutions, the international organisations and the civil associations of the Republic of Macedonia, through donors and partners who contributed in the implementation of the activities for the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration.

Table 1: The following entities provided funds for the organised activities:

Mol	230,018.00 MKD
Reception Centre for Foreigners	3,071,826.00 MKD
MLSP for the CVTHB	295,836.00 MKD

International organisations ⁷⁰	64,800,350.00 MKD
Civil associations ⁷¹	13,000,000.00 MKD
The total budget amounts to	81,398,030.00 MKD

5. INVESTIGATION AND CRIMINAL PROSECUTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANT SMUGGLING

5.1 PREINVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURE

5.1.1 Human/child trafficking

- **Ministry of Interior⁷²**

In the course of 2018, the MoI took measures and activities intended for detection and identification of individuals, organisers of criminal groups, members of criminal groups and accessories of these groups who were suspected to have committed criminal acts, in order to provide material evidence for the existence of the criminal act and/or perpetrator/s, i.e. for criminal prosecution of the persons involved in execution of the criminal acts – human trafficking/migrant smuggling.

In the course of 2018, no criminal acts of human trafficking have been registered, whereas **in six cases**, ten criminal cases of child trafficking have been detected. Namely, the Department for Suppression of Serious and Organised Crime took measures of criminal prosecution against **17 persons**, one of whom is national of Albania. Victims of these acts are female children who were forced into sexual and labour exploitation, and some of them were victims of forced marriages.

- **Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for prosecution of organised crime and corruption**

For the criminal act of child trafficking, criminalised in Article 418-d of the Criminal Code, in the course of 2018, the MoI initiated 4 cases against 13 persons

⁷⁰The International Organisation for Migration – IOM Skopje, within the regional and national projects/activities provided rough estimates of the total project budgets foreseen for implementation of about 300.000€ or **18,450,000.00 MKD**. The following funds were provided: the OSCE Mission to Skopje provided 43,600 EUR or **2,569,600.00 MKD**, UNHCR **4,914,350.00 MKD**, the ICMPD provided 564.017,54 € or **34,685,800 MKD** for implementation of the project *Study on Trafficking Resilience and Vulnerability en route to Europe (STRIVE)*, the Office of the Council of Europe in Skopje through the project Horizontal Facility provided 68,045.00 € or **4,180,600 MKD**.

⁷¹ In the course of the ongoing 2018, the Civil associations carried out activities on a voluntary basis and covering them from their own budget without compensation for funding of activities from the Budget of the RM. The civil association *Open Gate La Strada* used **13,000,000 MKD** for activities on the topic of human trafficking. The Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia conducted their activities with the assistance of trained educators, who also worked on voluntary basis.

⁷² Data received from the Department of Criminal Intelligence and Analysis.

(8 of whom are male, and 5 are female) and the following decisions have been made:

- Preinvestigative procedure activities are conducted for 5 persons (3 of whom are male, and 2 are female);
- For 2 males, the case was handed over for competent action taking of other prosecutor's office;
- Orders for conducting investigative procedure were imposed against 6 persons (3 of whom are female and 3 are male), after which indictments were submitted for all of these persons;
- Having submitted indictments for 4 persons (2 of whom are female, and 2 of whom are male), first-instance convictive judgments have been made, whereas for 2 males, there is ongoing main court hearing;
- The first-instance judgment for 2 females has been appealed against and the appeal procedure is ongoing.

For the criminal act – Human Trafficking Article 418-a of the Criminal Code, no criminal report has been filed in 2018, and no case was open.

Table 2: Tabular representation of identified victims of human trafficking in 2018

VICTIMS 9			
Children 6		Adults 3	
National 5	Foreign 1	National 3	Foreign /
Type of Exploitation		Type of Exploitation	
Sexual 3	Forced Marriage 3	Sexual 3	
Potential Victims of Human Trafficking 124* ⁷³ , out of whom 87 are children (75 female and 49 male)			

*Out of the total number of identified potential victims, 20 are identified between illegal migrants.

The potential victims of human trafficking are identified by:

- **The mobile teams** identified 104 potential victims of human trafficking, 65 persons (or 62.5%) are female, and 39 are male. Distributed per age, out of 104 potential victims, **79** (or 76%) are below 18, and 25 are above 18. Among them, 100 are nationals of the Republic of Macedonia, and 4 are foreign nationals. Out of 65 women – potential human trafficking victims, 45 are below 18 (**69.22%**),

⁷³ The element of exploitation is lacking among all identified potential victims, therefore they couldn't be categorised as VHT, as foreseen with the essence of the criminal act

whereas 20 are above 18. Out of 39 men – potential victims of human trafficking, 34 are below 18 (87%), whereas 5 are above 18.

- In the course of 2018, the field teams of the Civil Association *Open Gate – La Strada*, identified a total of **20 potential victims** among migrants (10 male, 6 female and 4 children), who showed signs of human trafficking. Therefore, the Association provided assistance for these 20 potential victims.

The large number of identified potential victims of human trafficking, where the element of exploitation is lacking, points out to the prompt response and field work of the mobile teams. This proactive action taking and the assistance and support given to potential victims brings about prevention of human trafficking and emphasises the need for larger field activity between the vulnerable groups on the territory of the whole country.

5.1.2 Migrant Smuggling

Fighting against illegal migration and human trafficking is one of the national priorities of the country as part of the strategic priority *Strengthening the Fight against Corruption and Organised Crime*. The statistics for North Macedonia shows that from the middle of 2018, significant increase of the number of attempts for illegal crossings has been remarked due to change of route and use of new directions for illegal crossing through the Adriatic Coastal Route – from Greece into Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

Furthermore, the statistics shows that there has been a four-fold increase of the migrant flow in Macedonia. A total of **16,895 attempts of illegal crossings** have been registered, and 88.4% of them have been registered on the border with Greece. The northern border is used for illegal exit from the country and movement towards the European countries, but at the same time, migrants returning from Serbia have been observed. The western and eastern border may not be part of the route used by the migrants, however, due to the configuration and the accessibility of the terrain, the vicinity of the regional roads and the populated areas along the border line, these borders are still appealing and used for illegal crossings.

At the Macedonian-Greek border, the number of migrants prevented in the attempt of illegal crossing has marked a four-fold increase. A total of 14,943 persons have been detected, most of them originating from the war-torn Middle East countries, namely Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, India, Syria, Iraq, etc. The most commonly used areas for illegal crossing of the border with Greece are the bus and railway station in Gevgelija – more than 60% of the cases, as well as the villages along the *Friendship* highway, whereas the border line of the Dojran, Kavadarci and Bitola region are used with slighter intensity. Taking enhanced measures and activities and setting up most frequent joint patrols, in the last quarter of the year, contributed for the migrants to change the route of illegal entry and to start moving towards the south-eastern part of the country, as Strumica, Radoviš, Sveti Nikole etc.

There has been a five-fold increase of the attempts for illegal crossings at the northern border with Serbia, where **1,661 such attempts have been registered**. This phenomenon results from the abuse of visaless regime that Serbi introduced for the nationals of Iran and India. Namely, these nationals, assisted by persons from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran and with the use of direct airlines introduced by Iran or from Istanbul arrive to Belgrade, and then use the services of smugglers to be transported to Bujanovac, Preševo and Miratovica. In the end, they are helped by smugglers from Macedonia, in the course of which their personal documents are taken and they are transported to the village of Lojane, where they are given directions for further travel towards Gevgelija and Greece. Some of the migrants are transported with road vehicles towards Gevgelija, and some of them are transported to the bus stations in Kumanovo and in Skopje, where they buy tickets for Strumica and Gevgelija. However, this number has marked a trend of decrease from the middle of October, until December 2018, as a result of the decision made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Serbia to abolish visa liberalisation introduced for the Irani nationals. The places in the region of the river Tabanovska, the road Miratovački, as well as some places in the surroundings of Kumanovo and Skopje are the places that are most at risk on this border, since the majority of migrants have been detected there.

One of the priorities of police work is detection and suppression of the organised criminal groups involved in migrant smuggling. For a more efficient fight against smuggling, the National Task Force for Fight against Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking was initiated. Along these lines, there has been a three-fold increase of the detected cases of migrant smuggling, and the detections prevented smuggling of 891 migrants. According to the structure, 62.7% originate from Pakistan, 13.2% from Afghanistan, 5.7% come from Iraq, 5.5% come from Bangladesh, 3.6% come from Iran, 3.1 % from Syria etc.

Criminal measures have been taken against 62 persons for 44 criminal acts of *migrant smuggling*, with 85.5% of the persons being Macedonian nationals, and the remaining are five Bulgarian, three Afghani and one Pakistani national.

What is worth mentioning is the detection and suppression of three organised criminal groups. The first is a four-member organised criminal group which smuggled migrants through the so-called green area from Greece into Macedonia, and during transport, due to the large speed, the vehicle fell off the road, with two migrants losing their lives on the spot, whereas 12 of them suffered severe injuries. *The second group* was composed of two Macedonian nationals and one unknown person from Greece, who were accepting migrants from Greece and then transported them to the Kumanovo-Lipkovo region, and then to Serbia, and in the course of suppression of this group, the attempt for smuggling of 18 migrants has been intercepted. *The most recent one* is a nine-member group, which, as part of international organised criminal network, organised smuggling of various groups of migrants from Albania and Macedonia

who could not obtain a regular travel visa towards the USA and Canada. The OCG thus obtained proceeds of crime in the amount of about 1,000,000 US dollars.

Due to these criminal activities, criminal charges were pressed against 15 persons for committing **six criminal acts** of “organising a group and abetting to perpetration of the criminal acts human trafficking, minor trafficking and migrant smuggling”.

The region of Gevgelija-Demir Kapija remains to be the **main route** used for migrant smuggling in the country. In the past, the Kumanovo-Lipkovo region, as well as the region of Štip have been used more commonly. A new modus used for migrant smuggling is by hiding the migrants in vehicles and buses, and thus helping them cross the border, but also hiding them in freight trains coming from Greece, which stands out from the regular modus operandi of smuggling and has been a more commonly used mode in the last three years.

- **Reception Centre of Foreigners**

In 2018, in the Reception Centre for Foreigners in Skopje, 317 persons have been accommodated, with 280 of them being male, and 37 are female. Distributed per country of origin, the majority of them come from Pakistan - 88,194 of the persons are aged between 18 and 35, whereas 68 of them are aged between 36 and 59 and a small part are children up to 17.

- **Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office for prosecution of organised crime and corruption**

For the criminal case **migrant smuggling as per Article 418-b of the Criminal Code**, in the course of 2018, **46 cases** were open (37 are cases open upon charges pressed by the MoI and 9 of them are cases initiated upon notifications submitted by the MoI), against a total of **73 persons**, 72 of whom are male, and 1 is a female.

- **32 cases against 48 persons** (47 male/1 female), decisions were made for taking action against 7 males in a preliminary procedure, a decision for dismissing of criminal charges was made for 1 male, a verdict on the basis of proposal for settlement in preliminary procedure was made for 8 males. For 32 persons (31 male/1 female), indictment proposals have been submitted. Out of these, for 12 males, there is an ongoing main court hearing, and for 20 persons, (19 males and 1 female), first-instance judgments of conviction have been made. The first-instance judgment was appealed against for 2 persons; for 1 of them, a second-instance judgment has been made for commuting of the first-instance judgment into a decision for criminal sanction.
- **One case was open against 4 males**; against one of whom was submitted an indictive proposal with an ongoing main court hearing, orders for conducting of investigative procedure have been given against 3 males: order for termination of investigative procedure has been given for 2 of them, and for 1

person, an indictment was submitted, with a still ongoing main court hearing.

- **13 cases against 21 males;** orders for conducting investigative procedure were given for these persons: out of whom, order was given for termination of investigative procedure for 1 person, for 2 persons, verdicts were given on the basis of proposal for settlement during the investigative stage, indictments were submitted for 10 persons, and for 8 persons, investigative procedure is still ongoing. After the submitted indictments for a total of 10 persons, for 8 persons, the main court hearing is still ongoing, and for 2 persons, first-instance convictive judgments have been made.

For the criminal act – **organisation of a group and abetting for perpetration of the acts of human trafficking, child trafficking and migrant smuggling as criminalised in Article 418-b of the CC**, in the course of 2018, the MoI pressed charges against 9 males, with decision made for implementation of investigative procedure: out of whom, for 2 persons, due to unavailability, order for termination of the investigative procedure was given, and for 7 persons, the investigative procedure is still ongoing.

5.2 CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

For the criminal acts related with human trafficking and illegal migration in 2018, in the Basic Court Skopje 1- Skopje, a total of 60 cases were received, with 82 defendants. Out of these, 48 cases have been closed and charges were pressed against 66 persons.

In the course of 2018, **imprisonment sentence was imposed to 20 persons in 10 cases**, whereas probation was imposed to 20 persons in 13 cases.

The duration of the **imposed imprisonment sentences** is between **1 and 6 years**. Charges are pressed for some of the abovementioned criminal acts against one civil servant employed at the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

The structure of the defendants in terms of the persons who were given effective court judgment is the following: in terms of Article **418-a**, three of the defendants are male, two of whom are of Albanian nationality and one is of another nationality. In terms of Article **418-b**, out of the total number of defendants (36 of whom are male, and 2 of whom are female), 15 persons are of Albanian nationality, 5 are Macedonians, 5 are Roma, 4 are Bulgarians, 3 are Turkish, 2 are Bosniaks and 4 persons are of another nationality.

A total of 150 EUR and 1620 MKD were confiscated and 2500 EUR and 200 MKD were seized. During the reporting period, no judgment was made that resulted in closing of business that was used for human trafficking.

Table 4 : Tabular representation of court cases and defendants

Article from the	Received	Completed	Effective	Imprisonment sentence	Probation
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CC	1		2		3		4		5	
	Cases	Defendants	Cases	Defendants	Cases	Defendants	Cases	Defendants	Cases	Defendants
Article 418 a	/	/	2	3	2	3	/	/	2	3
Article 418 b	57	76	45	60	33	38	10	20	11	17
Article 418 c	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Article 418 d	3	6	1	3	/	/	/	/	/	/
Total	60	82	48	66	35	41	10	20	13	20

6. Recommendations for planned activities for 2019

- ❖ Continuous implementation of the *2017-2020 National Strategy and Action Plan for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration*;
- ❖ Monitoring the amendments of the acquis, as well as the amendments of the legislation in the region's countries in the area of human trafficking and illegal migration aimed at prompt synchronisation of the national measures and activities with the EU measures and those of the countries of the region;
- ❖ Commitment to Implementation of Activities for Establishing and Implementing a Victim Compensation Fund;
- ❖ Providing support in the implementation of the activities of the National Unit (Task Force) aimed at increased identification of criminal groups and individuals who are planning, preparing and committing criminal offenses in the field of migrant smuggling and trafficking in an organised manner;
- ❖ Provide and support activities for the operation of mobile teams for the identification of vulnerable categories, including victims of human trafficking, in order to improve identification;
- ❖ Further building of the bilateral and regional cooperation
- ❖ The Ministry of Interior will be continuously monitoring the situation on the southern and northern borders and take coordinated measures and activities to successfully overcome and deal with the migrant crisis, increase the overall capacity and resources to deal with the situation, prevent its escalation and maintaining a stable safety state;

- ❖ Implementation of basic, as well as specialised trainings, as well as trainings on how to revise the SOPs for their continuous implementation by the stakeholders;
- ❖ Organising multidisciplinary continuous trainings for human trafficking and illegal migration due to building the capacities of professionals/concerned parties;
- ❖ Joint training of social workers with representatives of the National Task Force and the Public Prosecutor's Office for the purpose of coordinated actions and actions aimed at protecting the rights of victims;
- ❖ Specialised training for working with child victims of trafficking with focus on interviewing and trauma treatment for psychologists and social workers, including staff from small group homes;