



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

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

*OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
COMBATTING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN
BEINGS AND ILLEGAL MIGRATION*

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1. SUPPORTING FRAMEWORK

1.1 COORDINATION STRUCTURES

The National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration¹ (the Commission) is a body that unites and coordinates all stakeholders in the fight against human trafficking. The Commission is managed by a National Coordinator², with participation of two deputies³, one of whom is in charge of the situation and activities in the field of human trafficking, and the other one is tasked with the situation and activities related to illegal migration, the secretary and the members of the Commission⁴.

Working bodies have been operating within the Commission since 2003: the Secretariat⁵, in charge of implementing the Commission's decisions, and the Subgroup for Combating Child Trafficking (Subgroup) which monitors the specific needs of child victims, protecting their interests and rights⁶. The Commission, in the direction of efficient implementation of the activities of the National Action Plan to combat child trafficking, carried out an expansion of the membership of the Subgroup, for this purpose, nominations were provided from proposed organizations for which the Commission gave its consent, and then a Decision on appointment was drawn up of members in the Subgroup for combating child trafficking, with which the membership of the Subgroup was supplemented⁷.

¹ Decision published in the "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" No. 18/2001, 82/2015, 18/2019 and 240/2020

² "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", No. 309/2020

³ "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", number 309/2020

⁴ Members of the Commission, representatives of: the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption, Judge of the Basic Criminal Court Skopje, the Ministry of Education/Bureau for the Development of Education, the State Labor Inspectorate and the Employment agency of the Republic of North Macedonia.

⁵ Members include representatives from: international organizations, citizens' associations and experts from government institutions: Ministry of Interior-Unit for fight against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy-National Referral Mechanism, US Embassy, ICMPD, OSCE, IOM, UNHCR, GIZ, Regional Center-MARRI, program office of the Council of Europe, MZMP, the Association of Citizens Against Violence and Human Trafficking "Open Porta-La Strada", the Civil Association "For a Happy Childhood", the Civil Association "Semper", National Council for Gender Equality, and the Red Cross of Republic of North Macedonia.

⁶ It is chaired by the head of the Department for equal opportunities at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy-National referral Mechanism, and it is composed of: Ministry of Interior-NESKEKM, BRO, Program Office of the Council of Europe, ICMPD, OSCE, IOM, GIZ, UNICEF, Associations "Open Porta-La Strada" and "For Happy childhood", SOS Detsko selo, Children's Embassy MEDJAŠI, Roma Women and Youth Association "Luludi" and the deputy Ombudsman as an external member/observer.

⁷ Decision on amending the members of the Subgroup No. 10-493/1 of 30.06.2021

Throughout the year, the Commission maintained regular contacts with members and associates at national⁸ and regional level, where solutions and commitments were discussed and proposed for the advancement of the area of human trafficking (THB) and illegal migration (IM).

For the fifth time, the National Commission drafted new documents⁹, **National Strategy and National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration and National Action Plan for Combating Child Trafficking for the period 2021-2025 (NAP)**, which in 2021 were adopted by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia¹⁰.

The National Unit for the Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking (NESKMTL) in 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, successfully realized its main task - Detection and prosecution of perpetrators of crimes of THB and SM. It continuously acts in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures for Dealing with Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (SOP), whereby all identified victims of trafficking in human beings are reported to the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (NRM), which upon performing security risk assessments, the victims are referred to the Center for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (the Center). It participates in the exchange of information and data with relevant units from the Ministry of the Interior of the countries of the region on organized criminal groups and is part of the Western Balkan Task Force.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy), the Department for Equal Opportunities is coordinator of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and in 2021, continued cooperation with the Commission, as well as coordination with members of the Subgroup, the State Labor Inspectorate (State Labour Inspectorate), the Public Prosecutor's Office for the prosecution of cases of organized crime and corruption for the suppression of crimes related to migrant smuggling and human trafficking and the Ministry of the Interior/NESKMTL, the Center for Victims of Human Trafficking and relevant citizens associations. It continued to monitor and coordinate the activities (in 30 cities of the Republic of North Macedonia) in the Centers for Social Work (CSR), which have an exceptional role in the entire process from identification to resocialization and reintegration of THB victims and Child Victims.

The Chairperson of the Subgroup is the Head of the Department for Equal Opportunities from MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL POLICY, who in June

⁸ Meeting was held last year on 07/08/2021 in the Members of Parliament Club.

⁹ In 2006-2008, the first, in 2009-2012 the second, in 2013-2016 the third and in 2017-2020 the fourth Strategy and National Action Plan for the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration in Republic of North Macedonia were prepared.

¹⁰ The strategy and NAP were adopted at the 66th session of the Government of the Republic Of North Macedonia held on April 20, 2021.

2021 coordinated the process of preparing the Operational Plan for Combating Child Trafficking 2021-2022¹¹. after which it was submitted to the Commission.

The Commission is in continuous coordination with the National Reporter for the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration, exchanging information on certain activities and data that are needed for the preparation of the Reporter's report.

1.2 LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

During 2021, the interdisciplinary work group, coordinated by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), continued work on the Draft **Law on the payment of monetary compensation to victims of crimes**, which includes the crime of human trafficking. The proposed law addresses one of the main recommendations of GRETA for the consistent implementation of the Convention of the Council of Europe on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and international standards regarding the effective exercise of the right to compensation for the victims of this serious crime by the state. It is expected to be enacted in 2022. The access to state compensation will play an important role in the rehabilitation of victims, thereby sending a powerful message to the victim that the society recognizes that a crime has been committed against them¹².

The development of the National Strategy and Action Plans were realized with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) within the framework of a regional project financed by the European Union¹³.

In January 2021, the Law on Prevention and protection from violence against women and family violence was adopted, defining the trafficking of women and girls as a form of gender-based violence, and providing accommodation services for victims of human trafficking in the Center for Victims of human trafficking. A new Rulebook has been adopted on the manner, scope, norms and standards for providing the social service of temporary residence¹⁴ and for premises, funds, personnel and necessary documentation for the Center for temporary residence, in accordance with the Law on Social Protection referring to the Center for Victims of human trafficking¹⁵. Based on this Rulebook, a decision was made to determine the price of social services in the Centre, for

¹¹ The Program Office of the Council of Europe in Skopje provided expert support in the preparation of the Operational Annual Plan of the Subgroup for Combating Child Trafficking

¹² In order to secure funds from the Ministry of Finance for the full functioning of the Law, its adoption was postponed several times, hence in 2021 it was in the parliamentary procedure and a second reading is underway.

¹³ In addition, IOM supported the design and printing process of 250 copies of the strategy in the Macedonian, Albanian and English language, which were delivered to the Commission for further distribution to relevant stakeholders

¹⁴ "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", no. 91/21

¹⁵ <https://www.mts.gov.mk/pravilnici.nsp>

non-family protection, for professional help and support and for temporary residence for 2022. For the first time ever, it also provides a price for the service of temporary stay in the Center, pursuant to the methodology of forming the prices of the services depending on the norms and standards for providing the social service¹⁶.

The Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2026 has been prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and is in the process of adoption by the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia. The strategy aims to ensure complete gender equality, strengthening the position and status of women in society, equal access to resources and equal participation in decision-making in all spheres of social life, it strives to improve the state of gender equality in 13 areas, and pays attention to human trafficking.

Throughout the year, an inter-sectoral working group, established within the Ministry of the Interior, developed a **Gender Budget Statement for the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration**, showing the political will to promote and include gender equality in the fight against trafficking in human beings and illegal migration. The Gender Budget Statement was adopted by the Minister of Interior and is published on the website of the Ministry of Interior¹⁷.

1.3 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

➤ *Network of Coordinators for Combating Human Trafficking*

The National Coordinator for Combating Human Trafficking, Ms. Magdalena Nestorovska, attended meetings within the Network of National Coordinators for Combating Human Trafficking in Southeast Europe (SEE). The meetings were organized by ICMPD in the role of the network's secretariat, and due to the pandemic, they were held online. The first meeting¹⁸ was organized on 26-28 January 2021 and marked the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the National Coordinators Network, as well as the 20th anniversary of the United Nations (UN) Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. The meeting identified good practices and concrete recommendations for an improved criminal justice response in the fight against human trafficking, and also shared information on

¹⁶ "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" No. 264/19

¹⁷ The Gender budget statement was officially signed on January 14, 2022 by the Minister of Interior, Oliver Spasovski, and submitted before the MTSP https://mvr.gov.mk/Upload/Editor_Upload/rodovo%20krg_organized.pdf.

¹⁸ The regional meeting was hosted by the National Anti-Trafficking Agency of Romania (ANITP) and supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France and the ICMPD. The regional meeting marked the two significant anniversaries, took stock of the achievements of the previous two decades and set goals for the following years. It was attended by representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Greece, citizens' associations, regional and international organizations active in the SEE region.

the shortcomings of anti-trafficking responses during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as its impact on the possible increased occurrence of human trafficking from/in the region. The next meeting was organized on December 6, 2021, under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, organized within the Slovenian presidency of the European Union (EU). During the meeting, which was also attended by representatives of the EU Network of National Rapporteurs on Trafficking in Human Beings and/or Equivalent Mechanisms (NREM), ICMPD presented a draft document in the form of a non-paper¹⁹: "More than joint actions: Towards integrated responses against human trafficking in the member states of the European Union and the Western Balkans." The Commission also contributed to the drafting of the document in order to identify ways of cooperation between the countries of the region and the EU, including its institutions and agencies, as well as improve the quality and effectiveness of interventions to combat human trafficking across Europe.

Within the framework of the Regional Project of GIZ: "Prevention and fight against THB in the Western Balkans" (PaCT) two Steering Group Meetings were held. 4. Steering Group meeting was held on May 27, 2021 and the 5. Steering Group meeting was held on November 17, 2021 attended by National Anti-THB Coordinators who are also members of MARRI Participants, MARRI representatives, as well as members of the MARRI Secretariat.

➤ *Other international activities*

At the initiative of the Commission, in 2021, the ICMPD started drafting a research document referring to the impact of the Pact on Migration and Asylum of the European Union (published in September 2020) on migration flows in the region. The document should serve as a basis for starting a process of regional meetings, as well as planning and starting joint actions in relation to migration flows and cooperation with the EU in this direction. North Macedonia is the leader of the initiative, which was supported by Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2021, and it is expected that other countries from the Western Balkans region will also take an active part.

Within the framework of the EU/CoE Horizontal Facility II project **"Prevention and Addressing the fight against human trafficking in the Western Balkans,"** two Steering Committees and a Regional Conference "Joint Action in the Western Balkans for the Protection of Children from Human Trafficking and Exploitation" were held (June 22-23) with attendance of more than 130 participants from North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

¹⁹ In 2018, under the auspices of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the first Non-Paper was prepared in order to serve as a compass for future interventions in the fight against TL and identified a number of challenges and future actions for the overall response in the fight against TL.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) organized 6 (six) regional multi-disciplinary expert meetings²⁰ in which relevant actors in the fight against human trafficking from the Republic of North Macedonia actively participated as panelists and participants, contributing to the sharing of national experiences and good practices. The purpose of the meetings was to strengthen the capacities of the national law enforcement authorities and law practitioners, as well as the criminal justice system, in order to better identify, investigate, prosecute and try cases of human trafficking, protect and support the victims of human trafficking and strengthening cross-border cooperation in Southeast Europe. The Commission provided active input and support in the implementation of activities and hosted two regional expert meetings "Access to effective legal remedies for victims of human trafficking" and "Effective detection, investigation and prosecution of human trafficking and migrant smuggling, from and through Southeast Europe, with a special focus on gender and human rights."

- **March 3-4, 2021** "Access to effective legal remedies for victims of human trafficking,"
- **April 13-14, 2021** "Human trafficking for labor exploitation, especially children in Southeast Europe."
- **May 11-12, 2021** "Human Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, especially women and children, by addressing the demand in Southeast Europe" online using the KUDO platform.
- **June 9-10, 2021** "Addressing human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation through international cooperation."
- **6-7 July 2021**, "Addressing Child Trafficking with a Focus on Child Trafficking for the purpose of committing crimes in South East Europe."
- **9-10 December 2021**, "Effective Detection, Investigation and Prosecution of Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, from and through South-Eastern Europe, with a special focus on gender and human rights."

Several regional workshops were held within the framework of the **GIZ Regional Project: "Prevention and fight against THB in the Western Balkans"** - PaCT:

I. Within the framework of the NRM thematic package, on 19.01.2021, a "Regional workshop for the validation of the analysis of the National Referral Mechanisms" was held in the countries of the Western Balkans, in order to

²⁰ The six regional multi-disciplinary expert meetings were attended by national and international representatives from the public prosecutor's office, the judiciary and the justice system, the Ministry of Interior (police), representatives from the labor inspection, representatives from citizens' associations and international organizations, trade unions, representatives from private companies, university professors and independent experts from the following countries: Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Austria, Belgium, Greece, Germany, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

evaluate the functioning of the NRM and propose measures for its improvement.

II. Within the framework of the thematic package Developing capacities for identification of victims of human trafficking, four events were held²¹:

- Workshop on specific health related issues.
- Introductory meeting for development of health indicators and SOPs in emergency situations for identification of potential victims of human trafficking and victims of human trafficking in the six (6) MARRI Participants.
- Developing capacity to identify victims of human trafficking: Identifying, referring and supporting victims of human trafficking during the Covid-19 crisis.
- Developing capacities for identification of victims of human trafficking: The role of educational institutions in the fight against human trafficking.

III. Within the framework of the thematic package Raising public awareness – using the tools for raising public awareness when preparing campaigns, four meetings were held²²:

- Campaign strategies and planning - research and evaluation/monitoring phase;
- marketing and media relations, basics of communication in crisis situations;
- Digital campaign and storytelling;
- Regional workshop for presentation and analysis of public awareness campaigns for 2021/2022;

IV. Within the framework of the thematic package Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in the Reception Center and Shelter for Victims of Human Trafficking, several events were held: ²³

- Mental health and psychosocial support in reception centers: monitoring and evaluation workshop;
- Training on measures for mental health and psychosocial support in shelters for victims of human trafficking;
- Stress management and resilience;
- Basic training for coaching in shelters and reception centers;
- Second basic coaching training in shelters and reception centers;
- Presentation of "POY" Tool for coaching in shelters for the care of victims of trafficking in human beings;
- Using the "POY" Tool for coaching in shelters for the care of victims of trafficking in human beings;

²¹ 25-26.02.2020; 20.12.2021; 14-15.04.2021 and 03-04.06.2021

²² 25-26.02.2021; 11 и 19.03.2021; 25-26.03.2021; 13.04.2021

²³ 18.03.2021; 28.04.2021; 03-06.2021; 23-24.06.2021; 12.07.2021; 07.09.2021; 27.08.2021 and 14.09.2021.

- Application of Art-Therapy for persons in shelters for the care of victims of trafficking in human beings.

The Civil Association Against Violence and Trafficking in Human Beings “Otvorena Porta-La Strada” participated at:

- Regional Social Academy "Independent living and deinstitutionalization in the Western Balkans: are we there yet?" 3-day online training from October 20 to 22, 2021. The training helped the participants advance the capacities of civil associations, in terms of providing services in the process of deinstitutionalization and independent living of vulnerable groups (persons with disability, children and the elderly as well as victims of human trafficking.)
- the Final Conference of the **project BAN (Balkan Act Now!)** held on 9th of November, 2021 where the results achieved at the end of the four-year implementation of the project were presented. The main aim of the project was to strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation and institutional adaptation and adoption of the monitoring tool to enable objective and responsible monitoring of the quality of protection and assistance to victims of human trafficking. This event brought together national rapporteurs, national coordinators and representatives of Ombudsman offices from partner countries (the Republic of North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, BiH, and Montenegro), as well as experts who participated in the preparation of national reports on the availability and quality of services for victims of human trafficking from relevant institutions and associations of citizens, representatives of national and international organizations and representatives of BAN's partner organizations.
- **Workshop with the Dutch National Rapporteur on human trafficking and sexual violence against children** and the director of the Dutch National Rapporteur's Bureau (November 10, 2021). The aim was to facilitate the modus of direct exchange and dialogue between the Dutch National Rapporteur and National Coordinators/National Rapporteurs, ombudsmen, anti-trafficking offices, other representatives from Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia, responsible for coordination, monitoring and reporting on human trafficking cases.
- The final event within the framework of the **IRIS NETWORKing** project, organized in Belgrade, Serbia, as well as through the ZOOM platform on November 10, 2021. It aimed to present the overall achievements, milestones and challenges in the implementation of the Project during the past four years, and the possibilities for the future directions of the IRIS network in the Western Balkans.
- Meetings of the **Regional working group on monitoring** aimed to exchange experiences on efforts against human trafficking and the use of the monitoring tool. The working group includes 15 representatives from

the Western Balkans (the Republic of North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina) from anti-trafficking offices, police representatives, national rapporteurs and citizens' associations. The regional working group met twice, on April 28, 2021 and on June 29, 2021. Through the work of the working group, it was possible to measure progress, share good practices and adapt policies to realize challenges identified during the implementation of laws and policies in practice.

1.3 INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS DEDICATED TO THE FIGHT AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS AND ILLEGAL MIGRATION

- In April 2021, in order to promote international and bilateral cooperation, the State Secretary and National Coordinator hosted the State Secretary of the Republic of Slovenia. At the meeting, discussion and emphasis were given to the successful cooperation of the two countries in the field of European integration, the successful handling of the migration crisis, the fight against human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants, as well as the need to conclude a Protocol on the cooperation of the Commissions in the field of the fight against human trafficking. The Republic of North Macedonia shared a draft text proposal for which the negotiations for the harmonization of the **Implementation Protocol between the Government of the the Republic of North Macedonia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for cooperation in the field of combating human trafficking and child trafficking**. On December 9, 2021 in Skopje, a working meeting was held between the National Coordinator Magdalena Nestorovska and the National Coordinator for the fight against human trafficking from the Republic of Slovenia, Mrs. Tina Princes Damjanović, where agreement was reached on the steps for signing the protocol at the next meeting of the Ministers of the Interior in March 2022.

2. PREVENTION

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

At the beginning of 2021, an Assessment of the existing strategies and action plans in the six MARRI²⁴ members was published. The evaluation offered an analysis of the current structure and content of existing strategies and action plans to combat human trafficking, as well as good practices. It served as a basis to draw up recommendations for future strategic documents that will provide for a comprehensive response in the fight against human trafficking, which ICMPD summarized in the document: "Developing and Monitoring a National Response to Human Trafficking - A Practitioner's Guide". Within the framework of the ICMPD - ICAM project²⁵, during 2021, activities were initiated with the aim of developing Research Studies that should be completed during 2022 and will contribute to the further development of migration management in the region and to the preparation of awareness raising campaigns. Within the framework of the project, interviews²⁶ were conducted to be used in the development of a research study analyzing the connections between migrants' protection, development opportunities and the decisions they make to further move and reach destination countries. Also, within the framework of the same project, research was made on identifying good practices related to the management of mixed migration flows and human trafficking in the Republic of North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Austria.

The Office of the Council of Europe in Skopje developed a Study²⁷ for mapping the commitments of the business community and the private sector in the prevention of human trafficking and labor exploitation in the Republic of North Macedonia. Within the same project, 13 grants for investigative journalism were awarded. So far, 8 stories²⁸ have been created and published. In cooperation with

²⁴ Prepared within the framework of the project "Advancement of the strategic response in the fight against human trafficking in the Western Balkans", implemented by ICMPD in 2020 with the support of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and in partnership with the Regional Center for Migration, Asylum and refugees (MARRI), (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro).

²⁵ Informative measures and capacity building for asylum, legal and irregular migration in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Western Balkans funded by the Austrian government and the EU.

²⁶ With migrants, representatives of the Ministry of Interior and officials working in the reception centers. The interviews conducted in the countries of the region which were mostly affected by migration flows.

²⁷ Through the project from the Horizontal Instrument II of the EU/Council of Europe - Prevention and fight against human trafficking in Republic of North Macedonia

²⁸ Available at Publications about Combatting Human Trafficking (coe.int)

the Bar Association, a Brochure intended for lawyers, "Protection of victims of human trafficking" was produced²⁹.

Within the project "All together in preventing the trafficking of children and girls" financially supported by the European Union and the Council of Europe, an "Analysis of the findings of the research on the perceptions and understandings of high school students about human trafficking" was conducted.

"Otvorena Porta-La Strada" implemented:

- Regional Research - Assessment of Commercial Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Protection Responses in the Western Balkans "Exploited Before Our Eyes." Produced by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime in collaboration with Open Gate.
- "Monitoring and assessment of laws and policies to combat human trafficking and their implementation in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2019". The report was prepared within the project "Balkan act now!" (BDS)" in April, 2021. It was created based on the monitoring of court cases of human trafficking in different stages of the criminal court procedure and based on the aspect of different indicators that are already contained in monitoring the frame. The report was prepared in cooperation with the Basic Court of Skopje, Department for Organized Crime and Corruption, PPO for prosecution of cases of organized crime and corruption, NESKMTL, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Commission.
- Handbook "Youth workers key to the fight against human trafficking," aims to transfer and strengthen the knowledge and understanding of youth workers in several countries and empower them to practically play a key role in the prevention of human trafficking, including youth and migrants.
- Regional GAP assessment of the current situation in the provision of services to migrants and the desired perspective situation has been developed in order to identify discrepancies between the current situation in the provision of services to migrants and the desired perspective situation in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. It was developed through desktop research, interviews with relevant stakeholders, analysis of collected data and identification of current gaps. With such a holistic approach, it identified gaps in terms of existing services, user needs,

²⁹ The analysis is available in 3 languages: Macedonian, English and Roma language with the possibility of downloading at the following link <https://bit.ly/3fmOj3J>. A total of 403 respondents - high school students aged 14 to 19 took part in the survey, of which 295 were female and 107 male. In terms of ethnicity, out of the total number of respondents, 53.10% were Macedonians, 28.29% Roma, 8.44% Albanians, 3.97% Bosnians, with the remaining percentage belonging to other ethnic communities.

quality and standardization of services, allocation of funds for services and, provided solutions and defined tasks to be completed, to close this gap.

The OSCE Mission in Skopje, as part of its project activities planned for 2021, produced a publication³⁰: "Curriculum for dealing with victims of human trafficking", designed to help professionals increase their knowledge of human trafficking, in relation to of identification, protection and professional approach to victims of human trafficking. Two booklets were published with information on the rights of victims of human trafficking intended for victims housed in the Center for Victims of Human Trafficking and the second for victims housed in the Reception Center for Foreigners³¹.

Within the framework of the project implemented by the **Macedonian Association of Young Lawyers in cooperation with GIZ**, a Manual for Seasonal Work³² was issued, and an online information session for seasonal work³³ was also held.

The National Association SOS "Detsko Selo" conducted analyzes and studies aimed at detecting risks and trends among children and the young population. Namely, in the course of the year, mapping of the local context for child protection and analysis of risks in ensuring the safety of children was carried out, as well as an initial study of youth trends in the Republic of North Macedonia for the needs of the project "Youth participation for strong and sustainable development of the community". Participants in the study, through an online survey for young people between the ages of 15 and 29, a convenient, national sample was conducted on a total of 1050 respondents, of which 65.5% were female³⁴.

³⁰ Circulation: 200 copies in Macedonian language and 100 copies in Albanian language.

³¹ The brochures were drafted in Macedonian and translated into Albanian, Arabic, Farsi and Pashtu/ circulation: 500 (100 copies of each language). The materials are designed and are now in the stage of final approval before printing, after which they will be distributed.

³²<https://kazistop.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/MZMP-Priracnik-za-sezonski-rabotnici-vnatre-korici-za-web.pdf>

³³http://nacionalnakomisija.gov.mk/mk/%d0%bd%d0%b0%d1%86%d0%b8%d0%be%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%bb%d0%bd%d0%b0%d1%82%d0%b0-%d0%ba%d0%be%d0%be%d1%80%d0%b4%d0%b8%d0%bd%d0%b0%d1%82%d0%be%d1%80%d0%ba%d0%b0-%d0%b7%d0%b0-%d0%b1%d0%be%d1%80%d0%b1%d0%b0/?fbclid=IwAR2rSb6VHYuBRee_90WKOS3iq9Xv7XpCv_GY4GEnsq6A8Emhs0WM6KigwIY

³⁴ https://sos.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Pocetna-studija-za-mladinski-trendovi_MK.pdf

2.2 STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITIES OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND COMPETENT SERVICES

In view of the Covid 19 pandemic, the trainings in 2021 were conducted hybridly, some of them were held with physical presence in compliance with the recommendations, and most of them were held via video conference.

Last year, representatives of the Ministry of the Interior/Bureau for Public Security participated in professional training³⁵ in the field of human trafficking, which was attended by 115 police officers (28 women, 87 men) from several services³⁶ in the Ministry of the Interior.

Within the framework of the Horizontal Facility of the European Union and the Council of Europe for the Western Balkans and Turkey, through the **Office of the Council of Europe in Skopje** in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Subgroup for Combating Child Trafficking, the following were organized:

- Seminar on resocialization and reintegration, based on the needs of children (September 21), a total of 30 participants - social workers, citizens' associations, mobile teams, international organizations.
- Basic training on the gender perspective and human and child trafficking (September 28), a total of 50 participants, social workers, citizens' associations, mobile teams. According to the self-evaluation of the participants, knowledge increased to 4.87 out of a possible 5.
- Thematic discussion on proactive identification and referral of child victims of human trafficking.
- In cooperation with State Labour Inspectorate, an assessment of training needs and challenges for successful preliminary detection of victims of THB was made, which incorporated the gender perspective and comparative experiences. The analysis was presented and discussed with the State Labour Inspectorate at a round table organized online in May, with 74 labor inspectors, representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and citizens' associations..
- In cooperation with the **Education Development Bureau**, training was organized for psychologists and pedagogues from elementary schools to conduct an interview with a child who is a potential victim of human trafficking, in November 2021. 26 participants attended, 6 of whom had prior knowledge of child trafficking. The evaluation alone showed that the participants improved their knowledge to 4.67 out of a possible 5. Support was given to 80 basic cascade trainings organized by the Education

³⁵ According to data of the Ministry of the Interior, 19 trainings, 2 workshops, one course and one meeting were held.

³⁶ NESKMTL, Department for Border Affairs and Migration and the Regional Centers for Border Affairs, the Departments of Internal Affairs, the Department for International Police Cooperation

Development Bureau for proactive identification, assistance and referral of child victims of child trafficking³⁷. In the period October-November 2021, the Bureau for the Development of Education, with the support of the Council of Europe, realized a one-day online training³⁸ for teachers and professional associates from all primary and secondary schools by trained counselors from the Bureau. 5 (five) representatives from each school, members of the school's professional development team, were invited and participated in the trainings. Trained teachers/professional associates are representatives of a total of 400 schools, namely 293 primary schools and 107 secondary schools. 1821 teachers/professional associates have been trained, 1532 in the Macedonian language and 318 in the Albanian language. In terms of gender, out of the 1821 trained teachers/professional associates, 299 are male, and 1125 are female.

In cooperation with the **Academy of Judges and Prosecutors**, 2 webinars were organized in April on the rights of victims of trafficking and on the standards of the Council of Europe for the prevention and fight against human trafficking with more than 130 participants. At the same time, the second HELP distance course on human trafficking was organized in cooperation with the Academy, after which 5 judges and counselors in the court and 2 prosecutors passed the test and obtained a certificate for completed HELP course.

The third basic training for journalists for THB and the media was held on May 11, attended by 32 journalists and journalism students. The evaluations showed that 90% of the trained persons are ready to report cases of THB according to the principles of victim protection, keeping the gender perspective and the facts.

A webinar in cooperation with the project of the Council of Europe, Romacted, on the gender perspective, in providing protection to victims of human and child trafficking, held in October, was attended by 50 representatives of Roma from 15 municipalities.

With the support of the **IOM office in Skopje**, several events were held within the framework of various projects:

- in the month of September 2021, a coordination meeting³⁹ was held with 29 members of the mobile teams in coordination with the representative of the NRM from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in order to improve the work and coordination of the teams and their cooperation

³⁷ The analysis of the evaluations is ongoing, so far 9% of the evaluations have been analyzed, which show an increase in knowledge to 3.8 out of a possible 5.

³⁸ All trained teachers/professional associates will receive a certificate of training. Previously, materials, brochures and manuals were distributed to all schools by the Council of Europe.

³⁹ As part of a project financed by the Development Bank of the Council of Europe (CEB).

with other stakeholders involved in the process of prevention and protection of victims and potential victims of human trafficking.

- on November 18 and 19, 2021, a two-day training (NC, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and IOM)⁴⁰ was organized in Veles for 27 members (56% women) of mobile teams for identification, referral and assistance of victims and potential victims of human trafficking.
- From December 20 to 23, 2021 in Veles, a training⁴¹ was conducted on the topic of migrant smuggling and other forms of trans-national crime attended by 11 participants (36% women) from NESKMTL, Regional Centers for Border Affairs and the Public Prosecution Office for prosecution of cases of organized crime and corruption, with focus on indicators for the detection of cross-border crime, analysis and exchange of data, investigative methods including special investigative measures, regional cooperation in the suppression of transnational organized crime and others. Over 70% of the participants answered the questions in the exit test correctly.

Within the framework of the PACT project of GIZ in cooperation with the Commission, two trainings were held for the mobile teams:

- On June 24-25, 2021, a Basic Training⁴² "Conceptual framework for recognizing and combating human trafficking" was held for 19 participants, who had a percentage of correct answers before the training of 23% of the questions, while after the training, 80% of them gave the correct answer.
- Advanced training⁴³ was held on September 29-30, 2021, on the topic "Proactive role of mobile teams - multisectoral cooperation from identification interview to reintegration of victims of human trafficking" for 23 participants who answered 23% correctly to the pre-training questionnaire, and after completing the training, the correct answers are 83%.

⁴⁰ A project supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. As part of the training, the participants were presented with a revised Program for the identification and referral of potential victims and victims of human trafficking by the mobile teams, in compliance with the new Law on Social Protection. Also, the mobile teams increased their knowledge in dealing with vulnerable categories of persons when providing protection services, including detection, referral and support for victims, qualitative data collection in the process of handling, gender-sensitive protection services and gender-based violence such as vulnerability and stress management.

⁴¹ As part of a project funded by the Kingdom of Norway

⁴² The total number of participants is 19, (9 social workers and 10 police officers from the National Unit for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration, of which 9 (47%) women and 10 (53%) men.

⁴³ The total number of participants is 23, of which 12 men (52%) and 11 women (48%), 8 social workers women (35%) and 11 police officers men (48%) from the National Unit for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration, and 4 from the Macedonian Association of Young Lawyers where out of a total of 4 (17%) 3 are women, (13%) and 1 (4%) are men.

ICMPD within the project "Information Measures and Capacity Building for Asylum, Legal and Irregular Migration in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Western Balkans (ICAM)," aimed at supporting migrants transiting the Western Balkans region by providing information in order to reduced their vulnerability, in November 2021 conducted two capacity building workshops for stakeholders, in order to improve the response in the fight against human trafficking. According to the identified needs, one workshop was intended for young cadets from the Ministry of the Interior (basic training on human trafficking with 20 participants held on November 10, 2021), and the other one was intended for 15 local police inspectors and five local public prosecutors who cooperate in cases of irregular migration (which took place on November 11-12, 2021). Both workshops were conducted by ICMPD anti-trafficking experts who also developed a customized curriculum and methodology, according to the needs of each target group. The aim of the workshops was to strengthen knowledge about human trafficking, as well as human trafficking in the context of mixed migration flows, for operational purposes.

The OSCE mission in Skopje implemented "Training for dealing with victims of human trafficking"⁴⁴. The training was organized online in December 2021 in the direction of improving the identification, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of human trafficking and cooperation between institutions and organizations.

The Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors "Pavel Shatev" in the reference period has realized 7 events in the field of THB and IM on the following topics:

- On-line training on the topic "Use of electronic evidence in cases of transnational organized crime", February 9 in cooperation with the OPDAT Program at the US Embassy in Skopje. 29 participants took part, of which 14 judges, 14 public prosecutors, 1 representative of another institution.
- Human Trafficking and Refugee Law (regional event), February 23-25, Judicial Academy of Turkey - 1 representative from the Academy.
- On-line HELP course on "Prevention and fight against human trafficking" on March 8 for 5 weeks, in cooperation and financial support of the joint program of the European Union/Council of Europe "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans" and Turkey-phase II - a total of 12 participants, 7 of whom completed the course, 2 judges, 2 prosecutors and 3 professional officers (5 women and 2 men).

⁴⁴ Over 30 trained persons, 20 women, 10 men (social workers and psychologists from the YUMCSR, social workers from the Center for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking, police officers from the Border Police and police stations from all regions and citizens' associations.)

- On-line presentation of a legal analysis, "The rights of victims of human trafficking in court proceedings," March 17, in cooperation and financial support of the joint program of the European Union/Council of Europe, "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey" "-phase II-total 18 participants, of which 9 judges and 9 public prosecutors (14 women and 4 men).
- On-line webinar on "Council of Europe standards in the fight against human trafficking and protection of victims" April 12, in cooperation and financial support of the joint program of the European Union/Council of Europe, "Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey - phase II - with 100 participants, of which 6 judges, 13 public prosecutors, 59 trainees of initial training at the Academy, etc. (51 women and 50 men).
- Regional HELP online course on "Refugee and migrant children" in the Western Balkans, May 25 - with the support of the Council of Europe - a total of 40 participants, of which 13 judges, 1 public prosecutor, 3 expert associates, 2 jury lay judges, 8 of Ministry of the Interior and 13 from other institutions.
- ROUND TABLE on the topic: "Protection of foreign children in migration movements throughout the Republic of North Macedonia", December 16, in cooperation with UNHCR and IOM - 39 participants, including 2 judges, 1 public prosecutor and 36 from other institutions.

The **Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA)** supported 2 trainings for trainers in R. Serbia for representatives from state institutions from the region (Ministry of the Interior, Public Prosecution Office for prosecution of cases of organized crime and corruption, Border Police, citizens' associations), in the organization of the Balkan Council for Refugees and Migration (where MYLA is a member) within the framework of the regional project "Human security and borders - Fight against migrant smuggling in the Western Balkans". The first training was held on June 15-17, 2021, 4 representatives participated (1 male and 3 females). The second training was held on October 18-20, 2021, three representatives participated (1 male and 2 female)⁴⁵.

The "**Otvorena Porta-La Strada**" association promoted the TIP Childhub platform through which the association's employees and other professionals undergo trainings related to human trafficking, child protection, gender-based violence, and other topics important for everyday professional work.

A training of trainers was conducted from 1st to 4th November 2021, attended by 18 civil society professionals (2 men and 16 women), social service providers within the IRIS network and government officials from five partner countries an

⁴⁵ Both trainings were attended by: 2 representatives of the Ministry of Interior (1 M and 1 F) from NESKMTL and the Head of the Department for Cross-Border Crime, Migrations, Foreigners and Readmission, Regional Centre South, one representative from the Public Prosecution office for prosecution of cases of organized crime and corruption (1 female).

opportunity to build capacities for involvement in the delivery of social services for migrants and other socially vulnerable categories.

From November 8 to 12, 2021, training was held in Skopje for 15 professionals (3 men and 12 women) from citizens' associations, "Practical application of prevention of trafficking and protection of trafficked persons" as part of the project Youth workers - key to end human trafficking. 15 professionals from organizations from Italy, Malta and Romania participated.

Representatives of the association visited 6 trainings related to human trafficking, participated in the regional training "Development of capacities for identification of potential victims of human trafficking and victims of human trafficking" (special focus on education, health in Covid conState Labour Inspectorateions)" organized by GIZ, as well as online training on setting up safe psychosocial spaces, organized by / Refugee Trauma Initiative.

The team and volunteers of "Open Gate" took an active part in the training on "Prevention of Human Trafficking and New Initiatives" in Ontario, Canada, which was conducted from November 24 to December 2, 2021, at Brock University. The training was aimed at new and innovative practices that partner organizations from the Republic of North Macedonia, Malta, Romania and Canada can jointly implement.

Youth representatives from the association participated in a workshop "Civic Education - Chances and Challenges for Youth Work in Disadvantaged Communities" in Albania from September 18 to 25, 2021.

The National Association SOS "Detsko Selo" carried out activities aimed at strengthening the capacities of employees. A representative from the Association of Citizens "For a Happy Childhood" participated in the educational and informational sessions supported by SOS "Detsko Selo". Specifically, on 07.12.2021, an information session was held for employed foster carers and assistants in SOS Detsko Selo on the topic: "Trafficking in children, types, risk factors, methods of protection" attended by 25 people (24 women and 1 man)⁴⁶.

An educational session on child trafficking for participants in the Team for the Protection of Children from All Kinds of Abuse, in SOS Detsko Selo, was held on 24.12.2021 on the topic: "Indicators for the preliminary identification of children, potential victims of human trafficking" at which 16 participants (9 women and 7 men) took part.

⁴⁶ (caregivers and their supporting members), that is, 12 general and 1 intervention caregiver, 12 supporting family members, of which 24 are women.

2.2 PUBLIC AWARENESS RAISING AND EDUCATION

- **July 30th – World Day for Combating Human Trafficking**

On July 8, 2021, the Republic of North Macedonia joined the United Nations "Blue Heart"⁴⁷ campaign, through which funds are provided from the UN Voluntary Fund for victims of human trafficking, especially women and children, established in August 2010. This fund enables representatives from different sectors (governments, civil associations, international organizations, etc.) to cooperate and help victims of human trafficking by providing humanitarian, legal and financial assistance. For this purpose, the Commission organized a meeting attended by the Minister of Interior, Oliver Spasovski, and Bill Wood, Head of the Program Office of UNODC in North Macedonia and Regional Adviser for Serious and Organized Crime for South-east Europe, where they made official statements on joining of the Republic of North Macedonia in the campaign of the UN Blue Heart⁴⁸.

The Commission, with the support of IOM, organized a meeting to mark the **World Day against Trafficking in Human Beings - July 30, 2021**. At the meeting, the reactivation of the Mobile Teams for the Identification of Victims and Potential Victims of Human Trafficking in Bitola, Gevgelija, Kumanovo, Skopje and Tetovo was announced continuing their operation with the support of IOM.

"Open Gate" marked the World Day by promoting the rights and needs of trafficked persons with the message "Listen to the voice of trafficked persons" and a statement on social media. Additionally, a video clip on human trafficking was prepared and published in cooperation with "Vidi Vaka"⁴⁹.

- **European Day Against Trafficking in Human Beings (October 18)**

In order to mark the European Day, the Commission, with the support of GIZ⁵⁰, held an online information event to mark the **20th anniversary of the Commission's establishment with activities aimed at combating human trafficking**. The event was organized in a hybrid mode where the speakers were the National Coordinator, Mrs. Magdalena Nestorovska, the Head of NESKMTL, the Prosecutor Mrs. Smaćoska and the Assistant Head of NESKMTL, Mr. Markudov, Mrs. E. Grozdanova from Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, who

⁴⁷<http://nacionalnakomisija.gov.mk/mk/%d1%80%d0%b5%d0%bf%d1%83%d0%b1%d0%bb%d0%b8%d0%ba%d0%b0-%d1%81%d0%b5%d0%b2%d0%b5%d1%80%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%bc%d0%b0%d0%ba%d0%b5%d0%b4%d0%be%d0%bd%d0%b8%d1%98%d0%b0-%d1%81%d0%b5-%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b8%d0%ba/>

⁴⁸ This campaign is supported by 33 countries in the world, and North Macedonia is the second country from the region (after Serbia) to join the campaign to raise awareness of victims of human trafficking.

⁴⁹ Vidi Vaka is a media that brings current news from everyday life to a place where today's youth spends the most time, social networks.

⁵⁰ Provided financial support to a PR campaign through electronic media and platforms.

with their addresses marked this anniversary as well as the head of the Office of the International Organization for Migration in Skopje, Ms. Bozinovska and the president of "Otvorena Porta - La strada" Mrs. Rajkovska. As part of the event, statistical reviews/infographics with information were prepared and shared as an annex to this report.

On the occasion of the European Day, the Office of the CoE organized a panel discussion on proactive identification and referral of victims of child trafficking in cooperation with the Education Development Bureau and citizens' associations. Informational and educational materials for the prevention and fight against child trafficking were also presented, including the Manual for teachers and professional associates for the prevention and fight against child trafficking⁵¹. A brochure on the dangers of the Internet for the recruitment of victims of trafficking in human beings has also been produced.⁵²

"Open Gate" marked the 18th of October the European Day against Human Trafficking by sending a STATEMENT to all relevant institutions and persons and publishing it "Life is too short for anger and rage. I dedicate my whole life to you" – written by a protégé and given recommendations on how we can help them and what we should do to improve the rights of the victims.

The Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia participated in the marking of the 18th of October - European Day of Combating Human Trafficking by organizing preventive activities for peer education of the young population through the Red Cross of the city of Skopje and the municipal organizations of the Red Cross. The preventive lessons aim at raising the awareness of young people, recognizing the ways through which they can be involved in human trafficking and their self-protection. A total of 23 preventive workshops were organized, which included a total of 450 students from primary and secondary schools.

- **Anti-Trafficking Week**

On the occasion of the Week for the fight against human trafficking in the Republic of North Macedonia, the Commission promoted the video that was produced with the support of GIZ within the jubilee campaign to mark the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Commission, with some of the activities carried out in the fight against human trafficking. The video was uploaded and promoted on the Facebook⁵³ page of the Commission, which post reached over 2,500 reactions, comments, shares, views and clicks.

⁵¹ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-for-teachers-and-educational-professionals-mkd-version-/1680a4368b>
<https://rm.coe.int/handbook-for-teachers-and-educational-professionals-mkd-version-/1680a4368b>

⁵² <https://rm.coe.int/booklet-on-internet-deceit-mkd/1680a4ba56> Materials were developed in Macedonian, English, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian and Roma languages.

⁵³ <https://www.facebook.com/antitrafficking.macedonia>

Also during the week of December 9-10, 2021, the Commission, with the support and organization of UNODC, hosted a regional workshop that was held in Skopje, on the topic: "Effective detection, investigation and prosecution of human trafficking and migrant smuggling, from and through Southeast Europe, with a special focus on gender and human rights."

In the month of December, the Association of Citizens "For a Happy Childhood" held two one-day trainings with students from 4 institutes from the Faculty of Philosophy, in which 80 students participated on the topic: "The causes, types and ways of protection from THB", during which the films "Sisters" and "Lily Forever" were presented.

- **Preventive activities**

In the organization of the OSCE mission in Skopje and the Embassies of Sweden and France in North Macedonia on November 30, 2021, a panel discussion "Fighting human trafficking in North Macedonia - Prevention, Prosecution, Protection and Partnerships"⁵⁴ was held. National and international partners had the opportunity to discuss the current situation and achievements, challenges, propose recommendations and confirm and strengthen cooperation in efforts to suppress and eradicate human trafficking. Over 60 participants took part in the event (45 women, 15 men).

Within the framework of the ICMPD ICAM⁵⁵ project, mapping of the affected stakeholders was carried out and adequate information was collected on the services available to migrants, the risks they may face along the routes (trafficking in human beings, exploitation and abuse), the appropriate protection provided by have at their disposal, as well as information on their return. The information will be used to create a smartphone application (WeBSafe) aimed at migrants and vulnerable groups.

In the course of the year, the Council of Europe awarded three grants to raise awareness about human trafficking to the Association of Journalists for Human Rights who implemented a campaign⁵⁶ "Raising the Voice of the Invisible Workforce." Furthermore, the Association of women and young Roma "Luludi"

⁵⁴ The main speakers at the event were the Special Ambassador for Combating Human Trafficking at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Anna Eksted, the Ambassador for Combating Transnational Criminal Threats at the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Claude Brunet, the Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje Jeff Goldstein and the Deputy national coordinator of the National Commission for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration Svetlana Vlahovic-Dimanovska, (participants: social workers, psychologists, police officers, prosecutors, judges, representatives of mobile teams, ministries and citizens' associations).

⁵⁵ Information measures and capacity building for asylum, legal and irregular migration in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Western Balkans.

⁵⁶ For which he received a grant of 15,000 euros in 2020. The campaign took place through social media, 5000 cards and 5 billboards with messages against human trafficking were distributed, 2 videos published with 23,000 views, 250,000 views on Fb, 100,000 on Instagram and 200,000 on Twitter and online petition against TL for labor exploitation sent to 76 companies with 106 signatures.

implemented an education and awareness campaign of awareness among young people under the slogan "Get informed!" Anyone can become a victim of human trafficking. The campaign was aimed at the different and most common forms of human trafficking, how one can protect oneself or others to prevent the increase in the number of victims of human trafficking, and raising awareness among the media, institutions and local communities, April - May 2021.⁵⁷ Macedonian of Young Lawyers Association implemented the campaign aimed at children with disabilities, their parents and teachers.⁵⁸

During 2021, "Open Gate" carried out three campaigns, namely: Balkan act now!, which contains posters, a mobile application and media tools through which action is taken to prevent human trafficking. The posters were distributed in secondary educational institutions and the mobile application was presented through organized preventive lessons. The regional advocacy campaign #socialservicesforall "Social services for all" is focused on promoting the needs of users of social services and comprehensive policies, in order to influence policies related to migration to the countries of the Western Balkans. The campaign itself emphasized the importance of social services provided by citizens' associations in the countries of the region and their impact on users from vulnerable categories. The campaign "Do not rush into things!" is aimed at informing and raising public awareness about the risks of human trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation, which started in 2020 and continued to be active in 2021 through social media.

Namely, in anticipation of sharing experiences about the challenges that citizens' associations face during the licensing process, "Otvorena Porta" conducted the Public Debate: "Improvement of the process for the involvement of civil society organizations in providing social services for vulnerable groups of citizens" which took place on October 29, 2021 at the Hilton Hotel, Skopje. The event was attended by a total of 28 representatives from the members of the IRIS network, representatives of other civil associations from the Republic of North Macedonia and institutions. Through the event, emphasis was placed on the opportunities offered by the Law on Social Protection, especially the licensing section of social service providers and the role of social plans.

- 9 online educational workshops were conducted in order to increase children's awareness of the dangers of human trafficking, attended by 112 young people (89 girls and 23 boys) from secondary schools. The purpose

⁵⁷ The campaign reached 474 high school students who participated in workshops on this topic. 5 brief creative videos were prepared by high school students. The campaign was conducted in Macedonian and Roma languages, on social media with 521288 views, 560 shares and 881 likes. <https://bit.ly/3cX9t7N>

⁵⁸ 2 videos were produced which had 14725 views and 126 people participated in the educational sessions.

of the workshops was for young people to get to know the problem of human trafficking, to inform them how they can protect themselves and where they can turn for help.

- In December 2021, a one-day workshop was held with young people (high school children and students) covering topics related to the prevention of human trafficking, exploitation, violence and the promotion of human rights. The workshop enabled 25 young people to reinforce their critical thinking and learn how to protect themselves and their loved ones.

In 2021, MYLA in partnership with GIZ implemented a campaign to raise awareness about the risks of THB when performing Seasonal work. The campaign included the development of 2 videos: one, intended for workers and the other for employers, which were placed and advertised on social media, as well as on several national televisions (in Macedonian, with Albanian and Roma translation). Furthermore, as a continuation of the campaign for seasonal work, 3 short informative videos were produced, in order to provide answers to frequently asked questions of agricultural seasonal workers, separated as a separate target group. The videos were promoted on social networks and made in Macedonian and Albanian⁵⁹ languages.

Within the framework of the same project, an educational campaign was conducted by holding direct information sessions with farmers. An informative flyer was also produced and used as promotional material during the educational sessions held in 5 different regions: Gostivar, Prilep, Strumica, Negotino and Radovich. A total of 100 farmers were included. As part of the regional component, in collaboration with MYLA, GIZ and MARRI, a "motion graphic" video was made as part of a campaign to raise awareness of the risks of labor exploitation of migrants transiting through the region. In addition, promotional materials have been developed and will be shared with migrants in the region.

MYLA, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the EU, held 5 educational sessions for a total of 54 children with disabilities (25 female and 29 male) on the topic: "Protection of children with disabilities from child trafficking" and 3 educational sessions were held on the same topic. for 36 parents and guardians of children with disabilities (32 women and 4 men) and 2 educational sessions for 35 teachers working with children with disabilities (28 women and 7 men). Additionally, two videos were produced and promoted to raise awareness among the general public about human trafficking among children with disabilities.

⁵⁹ More on <https://kazistop.mk/>

The citizens' association "For a happy childhood" organized a specialized training of students with sufficient prior knowledge about child trafficking, about the indicators for preliminary identification of children who are potential victims/victims of child trafficking, about the problems of street children (25 participants) in October - December. The association also conducted training for students to work with street children on the topic: "Indicators for detecting potential victims of trafficking in children among street children", during which 30 students were trained.

Its representative participated in several projects, specifically:

- In a project supported by the Office of the Council of Europe, implementation of a basic training for psychologists and teachers from primary schools in Skopje, on the topic "Interviewing, protection, assistance and referral of a child who is a potential victim of human trafficking" - 26 people participated, (25 women and 1 man), and was held on November 24, 2021. The participants improved their knowledge of the topic with the average score: 4.67

- In project activities of IOM, several trainings were conducted, namely: Two-day online training of professionals in the Centers for providing services to vulnerable categories of migrants, on the topic: "Standard operating procedures for dealing with unaccompanied foreign children" and "Standard operating procedures for dealing with vulnerable categories of foreigners" in which 39 people (35% women) took part and they were held on March 30 and April 1, 2021. The percentage of success of the training was measured: before with an accuracy of 42.8% and after the training average of knowledge accuracy 91.8%.

- Training to strengthen cross-border cooperation and border management capacities of the Republic of North Macedonia on the topic: "Standard operating procedures for dealing with vulnerable categories of persons - foreigners and SOP for unaccompanied foreign children" in which 18 people participated, 5% of whom were women (14 and 15.12.2021). The percentage of success of the training was measured: before, with an accuracy of 18.87% and after the training an average accuracy of 81.13.

The National Association SOS "Detsko Selo" conducted a training/Information session aimed at informing and raising awareness among children, attended by a representative from the Association of Citizens "For a Happy Childhood". The training was held on 05.12.2021 on the topic: "Trafficking in children, types of child trafficking, risk factors, methods of fraud, recognition of cyber fraud" which was attended by 30 participants who have the status of child without parents and parental care aged from 13 to 18 years old, all female.

In the course of the year, the Red Cross Association from Skopje and the municipal organizations of the Red Cross organized a total of 62 preventive workshops, which included 1,447 people.

3. SUPPORT AND PROTECTION OF VICTIMS AND MIGRANTS

3.1 MECHANISMS FOR IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL OF VICTIMS

In order to reinforce national capacities and increase the efficiency of the police and the prosecution in suppressing the organized forms of smuggling of migrants and THB, the effective and efficient functioning of NESKMTL established in 2018⁶⁰ with the aim of better coordination and cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior and the Public prosecutor's office for prosecuting organized crime and corruption of the the Republic of North Macedonia continued throughout the year.

With the support of IOM⁶¹, 5 mobile teams (MT) were reactivated in August 2021 for identification of victims and potential victims of human trafficking in Bitola, Gevgelija, Kumanovo, Skopje and Tetovo⁶². The five mobile teams were active in implementing program activities including regular meetings, field visits, contacts, referrals and assistance to vulnerable groups, victims and identification of potential victims and victims of human trafficking.

ICMPD within the framework of the regional project "Developing approaches to improve the functionality of NRMs among MARRI participants", in 2021 started working on drafting practical approaches in order to improve the functionality of national referral mechanisms for victims of human trafficking in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The approaches contain streamlined methods, instructions, tools and good practices for: (1) involving/participating survivors of trafficking as advisors in both the policy development process and the operational response to THB; (2) improvement of communication and coordination channels between relevant stakeholders in NRM; and (3) developing criteria for reaffirming the participation of citizens' associations within the NRM in the MARRI region. The project is implemented in partnership with MARRI and is financed by the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ).

⁶⁰ More about NESKMTL in the Annual Report of the National Commission to Combat Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration for 2018.

⁶¹ Within the framework of the project "Support of the capacities for prevention and protection of the Republic of North Macedonia" supported by the Development Bank of the Council of Europe – CEB.

⁶² The work of the MT is determined in a Memorandum of Cooperation concluded between the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Ministry of Interior in January 2018. Representatives from the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and representatives of citizens' associations (the "Open Gate" Citizens' Association continues to participate in the mobile team in Skopje while the Macedonian Young Lawyers' Association has representatives in Tetovo, Kumanovo, Bitola and Gevgelija and provides legal assistance and information to THB victims, potential THB victims, as well as vulnerable categories of persons) who work in the field of combating human trafficking and contribute towards deepening the cooperation between the institutions in order to identify the vulnerable categories of persons, including victims of THB.

During 2021, the free SOS Human Trafficking Helpline (0800 1111 and 02 2 777 070) at Open Gate continued to operate 24/7 every day with five SOS operators. During 2021, the SOS line received a **total of 403 calls**.

Human trafficking helpline operators provided general information on the phenomenon of human trafficking, safety tips for working abroad, crisis intervention, emotional and psychological assistance, legal counseling for (potential victims and their parents, relatives), etc. Due to the corona virus, the SOS line had a large number of calls asking for psychological support and advice.

On October 6 and 7, 2021, "Otvorena Porta" held two one-day trainings entitled "Effective assistance and referral of SOS callers", at which 21 participants increased their knowledge and capacities for counseling in cases of human trafficking, violence against children and redirecting clients to obtain the necessary services.

3.2 IDENTIFICATION, REFERALL AND DIRECT ASSISTANCE OF VICTIMS

In the Republic of North Macedonia, according to the statistical data from the performed identification, the dominant form of human trafficking is labor exploitation, but the other forms are not excluded: forced marriages, sexual and labor exploitation and begging. All victims and potential victims are **referred and cared for in accordance with SOP**.

During 2021, the institutions⁶³ **identified 48 victims of human trafficking, of which 6 were children** (5 female and 1 male child aged 8 to 17). Most of the victims this year are foreigners, 40 adults (35 men and 5 women), while of the 8 domestic victims, 6 are children. In terms of origin, 8 are citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, 39 (35 men and 4 women) citizens of the Republic of Taiwan who were forced to commit telecommunications fraud on citizens of Taiwan, and one citizen of Russia, while in terms of nationality, the largest number are Taiwanese, Roma, Albanians, Macedonians and of Russian nationality.

The place of exploitation of the victims is the central and western part of the Republic of North Macedonia, and one case in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Belgium.

In addition to the officially identified victims, the competent institutions also identified **10 potential victims (8 female, 2 male)**, of which 5 were children. It is characteristic of children that 2 male children aged 13 to 15 have been identified as potential victims among illegal migrants. In terms of origin, 5 are domestic citizens and 5 are foreign citizens from Russia, Kosovo, Ukraine and Syria.

The Mobile Teams assisted 260 users (88 men and 171 women) who were initially contacted and informed within the reference period. Of the total

⁶³ Mol, NESKTMLS, MLSP/NRM and mobile teams

number, 245 are domestic citizens and 15 are foreign citizens. At the same time, 67 potential victims from vulnerable categories (12 men and 55 women) were identified, of which 65 domestic citizens and 2 foreign citizens and 186 vulnerable categories (74 men and 112 women), 175 were domestic citizens and 11 foreign citizens. , with no ongoing risk of human trafficking. From the total number of contacted persons, **7 persons have been referred to the services for their formal identification** (3 men and 4 women), 5 domestic citizens and 2 foreign citizens, of which **3 victims and 2 potential victims** have been officially identified, and with 2 persons are still being identified.

During 2021, a total of 7 people stayed at the **Center for Victims of Human Trafficking**⁶⁴, of which **4 women** (2 children and 2 adults), 1 victim of human trafficking and 3 potential victims were accepted and accommodated in the current year, of which two foreign. In addition, 3 victims (girls) from previous years stay in the Center. The average length of stay is from one week to 10 months, and the victims who left the Center are accommodated in appropriate locations according to the assessment of the competent Center for Social Work.

After giving a statement before a Public Prosecutor from PPO for prosecution of cases of organized crime and corruption and expressing their voluntary intention to return to their home country without assistance, the accommodated foreign nationals spent the night in the Center and the next day, they left the country and did not receive a temporary residence permit. Basic needs and services are provided to the persons housed in the Center⁶⁵.

Within the framework of the Center, by "Open Gate", the program for psycho-social assistance and support of victims of human trafficking is regularly implemented, for the purpose of their stabilization, overcoming of traumas, easier and more successful inclusion in the current processes of social life. Specialized psycho-social counseling is provided to 17 people involved in the program. A standard package of services is provided to meet their basic needs⁶⁶ and a basic package of medical assistance is provided to 7 people including the victims accommodated in the Center⁶⁷. For one person, a psychiatric assessment on medical psychophysical condition (expert examination) by a specialist psychiatrist. 2 persons placed in the Center were provided with continuous medical therapy, and 3 positive for Covid 19, professional medical assistance during the isolation, as well as vitamin and other necessary therapy. In addition,

⁶⁴ The overhead costs for the functioning of the Center are financed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, while the service is financed by the Government of Republic of North Macedonia within the framework of the Program for the support of the civil sector.

⁶⁵ (clothing, food, hygiene products), psychosocial counseling, medical examinations (dental, laboratory).

⁶⁶ (accommodation, food, hygiene packages) for persons included in the Psychosocial Support Program

⁶⁷ Using services from specialists from different fields (psychiatrists, dermatologists, dentists, internists, laboratory tests, gynecological, testing for Covid 19)

professional assistance was provided for 10 people involved in the Program for accompanying social work through activities for their reintegration into society. The work of the expert team is organized in 24-hour shifts. During the year, the expert team provided help and support to a total of 56 people, of which 48 are newly identified victims.

In cooperation with the Center for Social Work, work is being done on their stabilization and resocialization, reintegration and professional activities that are applied according to the prepared individual plans. Part of the activities undertaken relate to strengthening the personal potential of the victims through counseling and support, provision of alternative education, occupational and creative workshops to improve the intellectual capacities and psychophysical health of the accommodated persons. Psychosocial counseling is included in daily activities, which is given through individual and group sessions using techniques and interventions from different psychosocial therapy. 5 people were enabled to participate in education, of which four persons placed in the Center joined the educational process, 2 of them are again enrolled in primary education, 1 is included in secondary vocational education and 1 protege is included in the educational process in the school for the first time for adults, while one beneficiary of the Program for accompanying social work rejoined the educational process in high school.

Meetings and contacts with the CSW and the appointed guardians were carried out continuously, one person was on a week-long visit to her home during the holidays, another had a meeting with her younger brothers and sister who are placed in a foster family. In addition, 5 families of victims of human trafficking, i.e. 30 people, were provided with food and hygiene aid.

The citizens' association "Otvorena Porta" provided a translator and information about organizations in the country of origin for 39 people, foreign victims placed in the Reception Center for foreigners. On their part, 3 people were referred to the Ministry of the Interior-NESKMTL who requested help through the SOS line for help and support.

In the **National Association SOS Detsko Selo**, within the framework of the system of alternative care, psycho-social assistance and support is provided to children from a vulnerable category, including potential victims of human trafficking. At the same time, SOS Detsko Selo referred 2 people to the police station and a mobile team in Skopje for preliminary identification and detection of victims of trafficking in human beings.

Upon inquiries made by NESKMTL on the referred persons, no elements of the criminal act "Trafficking in human beings/child" were confirmed and the Associations were notified thereof.

3.3 LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS AND MIGRANTS

The association "Otvorena Porta-La Strada" in 2021, in accordance with the accompanying social work program, provided legal assistance and representation to 4 victims of THB in different stages of the procedure for the protection of their rights. In the ongoing cases from previous years and in 2021, 6 people were provided with legal assistance and representation at different stages of the procedure for the protection of their rights.

During 2021, MYLA continued to grant free legal assistance and counseling to 573 migrants, as well as free legal aid and representation to about 260 asylum seekers within the project implemented in partnership with UNHCR.

During the last year, one victim of human trafficking was compensated. One victim after a verdict from 2015, having submitted several petitions submitted to the Basic Criminal Court, in August 2021 was paid compensation in the amount of 400,000.00 denars for non-material damage, after the perpetrator was found guilty⁶⁸. After approximately one and a half years, the court issued a decision based on which program of the Ministry of Justice the compensation was paid.

4. INVESTIGATION AND CRIMINAL PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS AND SMUGGLING OF MIGRANTS

4.1 PRETRIAL PROCEDURE

4.1.1 Trafficking in human beings/child

- Ministry of Interior⁶⁹

During 2021, NESKMTL conducted 5 investigations: one reactive investigation under Article 418-a, three reactive investigations under Article 418-d and one reactive investigation under Article 418-d and Article 194 "incest".

A total of 22 perpetrators have been identified (13 citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, 9 citizens of Taiwan), of which nine perpetrators are male and one is female for a crime under Article 418-a of the Criminal Code of the Republic of North Macedonia and 11 perpetrators (of which five from female and seven male) for a crime under Article 418-d of the Criminal Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, of which one male person is reported as a user of sexual

⁶⁸ According to the Law on Justice for Children, child victims have the right to compensation from the budget of the Ministry of Justice, if the funds cannot be recovered from the perpetrator of the crime. A child who has been determined to be a victim by a final court decision and has recognized property claim submits a request for execution of the judgment before a competent executor. In case the convicted person does not avail of any property from which the damage can be collected, the victim requests the criminal court to issue a decision confirming the amount of the damage.

⁶⁹ Data obtained from the Department of Criminal Intelligence and Analysis.

services from victims of trafficking in human beings. All perpetrators are adults and citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

The "Red Button" application, which enables citizens to electronically report a specific crime, share knowledge or information related to child abuse, human trafficking, and hate crime, operates within the Ministry of the Interior – Sector for Reporting and Coordination of Situations. In 2021, after the reports received on the application, there were no registered cases with indications of human trafficking.

- **Basic Public Prosecution Office for prosecution of cases of organized crime and corruption (PPO for PCOCC)**

In the current year, no criminal charges (CCs) have been filed by the Public Prosecution Office for prosecution of cases of organized crime and corruption for the crime of **human trafficking under Art. 418-a of the Criminal Code**, while in 2021, criminal charges have been filed under **Art. 418-d of the Criminal Code 1 criminal charge against 3 persons** (of which 2 persons are male and 1 person is female).

No indictments have been filed for the criminal offense under Art. 418-a of the Criminal Code, while a case has been opened for the criminal offense under Art. 418-d, which is in the investigation phase.

Of the registered persons, there are no registered officials or a person who holds a public office.

Table 2: Identified victims of human trafficking in 2021

IDENTIFIED 48 VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS					
Children 6			Adults 42		
National 6		International /	National 2		International 40
Type of exploitation			Type of exploitation		
Forced marriage 4	Sexual 1	Begging 1	Labor 39	Labor and sexual 2	Sexual 1
10 – potential victims of trafficking in human beings ⁷⁰ Out of whom 5 women and 5 children (3 girls, 2 boys)					

⁷⁰Out of the total number of identified potential victims, 2 are children identified among illegal migrants, they have been assigned a guardian and are safely accommodated. Such proactive action and providing help and support to potential victims contributes to the prevention of human trafficking and emphasizes the need for greater operational and field activity among vulnerable groups.

4.1.2 Smuggling of migrants

- **Ministry of Interior**

In 2021, NESKMTL conducted 4 proactive investigations under Article 418-b and 418 c, one of which was realized (an organized criminal group was suppressed and 13 persons were deprived of their liberty). Two police actions were carried out in open operational actions by NESKMTL under Article 418-b and 418-c against 8 perpetrators (6 from Pakistan and 2 from Afghanistan), one of which is an international investigation with the Republic of Serbia, and one person has been reported discovered during an organized illegal migration transport in one of the proactive investigations.

1. State of affairs with illegal migration

Illegal migration continues to be current in 2021. The trend of illegal crossings via the Western-Balkan and Adriatic route (Turkey-Greece-Bulgaria-Serbia; Turkey-Greece-North Macedonia-Serbia and Greece-Albania-Montenegro-BiH-Croatia) is still active and being used. In the Republic of North Macedonia, attempts at illegal border crossings with neighboring countries show a decreasing trend by 35%. 20,874 attempts to illegally cross borders were prevented (11 thousand attempts less compared to 2020). If we analyze the statistical data by month, it can be concluded that the most attempts are made during the first quarter (March and April) and the third quarter of the year (September and October 2021). They show a decrease compared to last year as a result of the strengthened measures and closed borders in order to prevent the spread of the pandemic with the Covid-19 virus, while the lowest number of attempts were prevented during February (958).

And this year, the organization and coordination of all activities related to the realization of the "International joint operation for enhanced surveillance of the southern border of the the Republic of North Macedonia" continued, with the engagement of police officers from abroad. Police officers from eight countries participate in this activity⁷¹. Together with members of the border police, in joint mixed patrols, they carry out intensified surveillance of the southern part of the state border aimed at preventing attempts at illegal entry or exit of migrants from R. Greece and the discovery of migrant smuggling cases.

State of affairs of attempts for illegal border crossings

Most of the attempts are still being prevented at the southern border with R. Greece (18,424), where a decrease of more than 34% was recorded compared to the same period last year. The most risky area with a high degree of danger which was used by migrants in the past period for illegal crossing is the area of the Bogorodica border crossing police station, i.e. the border villages in the

⁷¹ Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia

Gevgelija region, due to the location of the stationed camps near Thessaloniki and the camps near the border line with North Macedonia. The second region is Dojran or through Belasica mountain they descend to the foot of the village of Bansko-Strumica.

Table 3: Presentation of prevented illegal crossing attempts in 2021/2020

	2020	2021	+/-
Albania	110	130	18,2%
Bulgaria	986	6	Significantly reduced
Greece	27.971	18.424	-34%
Serbia	2.994	2.277	-24%
Kosovo	39	37	2,6%
Total	32.100	20.874	-35%

On the northern border with Serbia, in the past period, there is an activation of an opposite route, i.e. entry from the northern border of citizens of Cuba and India, through the Republic of North Macedonia to the Republic of Greece, using the visa-free regime with Russia and the Republic of Serbia with final destination countries of the EU and USA.

As for the rest of the borders with neighboring countries, a decrease in the number of illegal crossing attempts was observed, especially at the border with the Republic of Bulgaria. Migrant smugglers use the roads in the eastern part of the country as an alternative to avoid police patrols. The result of this is the increasing number of cases of smuggling of migrants, who try to reach the highway Kumanovo-border crossing Tabanovce through Valandovo, Strumica, Radovich, Shtip with the aim of exiting to Serbia.

On the border with Albania, 130 people who illegally entered/exited the country were discovered, of which the most numerous are Albanian citizens (99), but it is characteristic that this year 26 migrants from the Middle East were also registered as leaving the country: 14 from India, seven from Morocco, three from Turkey and one each from Syria and Palestine, which was not characteristic of previous years.

Illegal crossings per country of origin

According to the structure of migrants, in 2021, migrants from Pakistan dominate (6,786), but there are also economic migrants from Afghanistan (4,452), which, unlike last year, recorded a significant decrease. In the top five countries of origin of migrants there are also persons from Syria (2,644) whose number increased significantly during August, September and October 2021, from India (1,355) and from persons without citizenship (1,216).

Last year, an increasing number of attempts were registered by persons of Somali origin (591), Cuba (583) and Eritrea (234). The appearance of Cuban migrants is due to the fact that Cuba introduced a visa-free regime with the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Russia and the Republic of North Macedonia. They use air transport and travel from Cuba to Moscow and then to Belgrade, because they do not have the conditions to continue the road to the countries of the European Union, they head to the border of North Macedonia. Some of the Cuban citizens enter the country legally, some have an illegal entry, and then continue to Greece, from where they try to go to European countries and the United States.

Smuggling of migrants

In the area of migrant smuggling, 64 cases of smuggling of 815 migrants were detected, while last year, 2,723 migrants were smuggled in 95 cases. As for the the country of origin, migrants from Pakistan dominate (254), while the top five countries also include migrants from Cuba (141), India (134), Syria (132), Eritrea (45), etc.

Chart 4: Summary of smuggling of migrants 2021/2020

	2021	2020	Reduction /increase
Detected cases	64	95	-32,6%
Number of migrants	815	2.723	-70%
Criminal groups	2	3	-33,3%

From the observations made, the detected cases of migrant smuggling decreased by 33%, and the number of smuggled migrants decreased by more than 70%, compared to the same period last year.

As for the crime "smuggling of migrants" under Article 418-b of the Criminal Code of the the Republic of North Macedonia, measures of criminal prosecution have been taken against 77 persons, all of them male, for 49 crimes committed.

Supressed organized criminal groups

The National Unit for the Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking has a special emphasis in dealing with this type of crime and during this period they detected and suppressed two criminal groups, criminally reporting 19 perpetrators for the crimes "Organizing a group and encouraging the commission of human trafficking, child trafficking and migrant smuggling."

The first is a 13-member organized criminal group that operated for a long period of time on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia and illegally

transported migrants from the Middle East, staying on the territory of R. Greece. The second group is composed of six people (four from Pakistan and two from Afghanistan) who illegally transported a group of 39 illegal migrants (including nine children) from the Republic of Greece to the Kumanovo-Lipkovo region as guides and then sheltered them. near the border line with R. Serbia in improvised camps, where they treated them inhumanely with the use of force and serious threats, restricted their freedom of movement, and committed sexual offenses (rapes) against two nationals of Eritrea and Pakistan.

In the current year, 12 people have been reported for committing two crimes "organizing a group and encouraging perpetratoion of the acts of human trafficking, trafficking of minors and smuggling of migrants" under Article 418c of the Criminal Code of the the Republic of North Macedonia.

Modus Operandi

Migrant smuggling has the support of the local population. The guides are often people (originating from Arab countries) who have been staying illegally on the territory of North Macedonia for a long period of time, as well as local residents who know the configuration of the terrain and the places where migrants can hide in case of a police patrol. Migrants originating from Arab countries are mostly accommodated in houses of local residents, abandoned houses of displaced persons, or persons abroad and makeshift camps in the Kumanovo-Lipkovo region, while migrants originating from Cuba and India are mostly accommodated in motels near Macedonian - the Greek border. They use modern means such as smartphones, drones, optical devices for night surveillance and establish a conference connection via Internet on phone applications, involving several members of the criminal group who inform each other about the conditions of the road and police patrols.

This year there has been a change as to the means used to smuggle migrants. The number of registered cases of migrant smuggling with passenger motor vehicles has increased, in contrast to last year, when in the majority of cases migrants were transported by trucks in order to transport as many people as possible.

Routes of movement

The main smuggling route is Corridor 10: Gevgelija-Skopje-Kumanovo-Tabanovce border crossing, while the traffic routes used for migrant smuggling and logistical support are the Gevgelija-Valandovo-Demir Kapija-Negotino-Veles-Skopje-Kumanovo route with the area of Sveti Nikole - Kumanovo - Kriva Palanka being increasingly used as an alternative route as part of the migrant smuggling route to Kumanovo and Skopje and further to the border with the Republic of Serbia.

- **Action controls in catering and hospitality facilities**

During 2021, on the territory of North Macedonia, police officers independently and in cooperation with the State Market Inspectorate carried out constant controls of catering establishments, cafeterias, bars, restaurants, clubs, casinos and sports betting shops. 32 action controls were carried out in catering establishments with the aim of discovering foreign nationals who are illegally staying and working as dancers and singers. 20 controls were performed in the area of Tetovo, and 12 in Gostivar. During the controls, 213 foreign nationals were found.⁷²

The National Unit for the Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking, in cooperation with the Department for Special Police Operations, on several occasions carried out action controls in several catering facilities to identify victims of trafficking in human beings, during which girls were found as dancers and accompanying guests, Macedonian and foreign nationals (Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Latvia). **During the action controls, two victims of human trafficking and one potential victim were identified.**

In order to comply with the restrictive measures adopted by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for protection against the Corona virus, in the period from December 18, 2020 to January 21, 2021, the work of catering facilities was restricted. Controls and searches were carried out by NESKMTL in several catering establishments in the area of Tetovo and Gostivar, while only one establishment was found to be working where 18 women were registered as dancers and guest escorts, 15 of whom were foreign nationals (Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Latvia), and three girls were citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Within the framework of two international operational actions, joint action days, organized by Interpol and Europol (Liberterra and Phenix), police officers participated in action controls in catering facilities on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. Victims of trafficking in human beings were not identified in the implemented action controls, and measures were taken by the Sector for Internal Affairs in accordance with their competence.

- **Foreigners Reception center**

During 2021, 197 people were accommodated in the **Foreigners Reception Center in Skopje**, 171 of whom were male and 26 were female. According to the country of origin, most of the people are from Taiwan-48, Turkey-29, Pakistan-

⁷²Out of whom 79 persons (36 from the Republic of Albania, 10 from Russia, 9 from the Republic of Kosovo, 8 from Ukraine and from the Republic of Serbia, 5 from the Republic of Bulgaria and 1 from Lithuania, Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina each) were with unreported stay and without work permit. As a result of this, 20 requests were submitted to initiate misdemeanor proceedings for 14 misdemeanors of the Law on Foreigners, and the court imposed fines and a ban on entering the country.

21, Syria-18, Kosovo-16, Afghanistan-12, Albania-11, etc., and in terms of age, the most numerous are the people of age from 18 to 35 years-129, then 46 are persons aged from 36 to 59 years, 16 from 14 to 17 years, etc.

• **Basic Public Prosecution Office for prosecuting organized crime and corruption**

(53 criminal charges have been filed against 74 persons (73 male and 1 female) for the criminal offense under Art. 418-b of the Criminal Code, while for the criminal offense under Art. 418-c of the Criminal Code in during the year, 2 criminal charges were registered against 15 persons (males).

For the criminal act under Art. 418-b of the Criminal Code, 31 charges have been filed against 42 persons (of which 41 are male and 1 female). For the remaining 5 reported persons, amicable settlements have been submitted to the competent court, for 15 persons, the cases are in the investigation phase and for 12 persons, the necessary notifications are being collected.

For the criminal offense 418-c of the Criminal Code, 1 indictment was filed against 9 persons (all male). For the rest of the reported cases, for 2 persons the case is under investigation and for 4 persons the investigation has been stopped due to their unavailability to the law enforcement authorities.

Of the registered persons, there is no official person or public office holder.

4.2 CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

For the crimes related to THB and IM during 2021, a total of 64 cases were received in the Basic Court Skopje 1- Skopje, in which 91 persons were accused.

In 2021, there are 76 final cases in which 78 people were sentenced to prison, while 22 people were sentenced to probation. The duration of enforceable prison sentences ranges from 1 to 12 years in prison⁷³.

In the reporting period, three judgments were passed that resulted in the confiscation of property and objects, that is, in the three cases, money was taken from the perpetrators.

There are no convictions that result in the closure of a business or organization.

⁷³ Duration of the imprisonment: Up to 1 year imprisonment for 11 people; 1 year to 2 years imprisonment for 18 people; from 2 to 3 years imprisonment for 9 people; from 3 to 4 years imprisonment for 6 persons; from 4 to 5 years imprisonment for 16 people; from 5 to 6 years imprisonment for 6 persons; from 6 to 7 years imprisonment for 1 person; from 8 to 9 years imprisonment for 8 persons; 10 years imprisonment for 2 people; 12 years imprisonment for 1 person.

Chart 5 : List of court cases and prosecuted persons⁷⁴

CC Article	Cases received in 2021			Closed			Enforced			Enforceable decisions-per persons					Unsolved/ Delayed
	Cases	Prosecuted persons		Cases	Prosecuted persons		Cases	Prosecuted persons		Imprisonment Constate Labour Inspectorateion	Indicted/ refused	Acquitted	Plaintiff redrawal		
		M	F		M	F		M	F						
Art 418 a	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
Art.418 b	48	56	/	53	74	6	64	88	2	70	20	/	/	/	21
Art.418 c	10	15	/	9	9	/	9	9	/	5	2	/	1	1	12
Art.418 d	2	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	2	3	/	1	/	/	1
Total	60	72	1	64	84	7	76	99	4	78	22	1	1	1	34
		73			91			103							

⁷⁴ Data submitted through a search in AKMIS - the system for managing court case in the Basic Criminal Court Skopje 01.01.2021-31.12.2021

5. BUDGET

The implemented activities were realized in partnership between the Commission, institutions, international organizations and citizens' associations. Donors and partners contributed to the implementation of the implemented activities to combat THB and IM.

Chart 6: Implemented activities through funds from:

Ministry of Interior	192.582,00 den.
Foreigners Reception Centre	1.202.740,00 den.
MLSP for Center for THB victims ⁷⁵	465.984,00 den.
Civil Associations ⁷⁶	15.618.611,00 den.
International organizations ⁷⁷	EUR 1.697.733

⁷⁵Ministry of Labor and Social Policy covers the overhead costs of the Center for victims of human trafficking 465,984.00 denars.

⁷⁶Citizens' associations: "La Strada Open Gate" for activities related to human trafficking spent funds in the amount of 13,000,000.00 denars. The Macedonian Young Lawyers' Association through projects from GIZ and the Council of Europe and the EU: 2,618,611.00 denars;

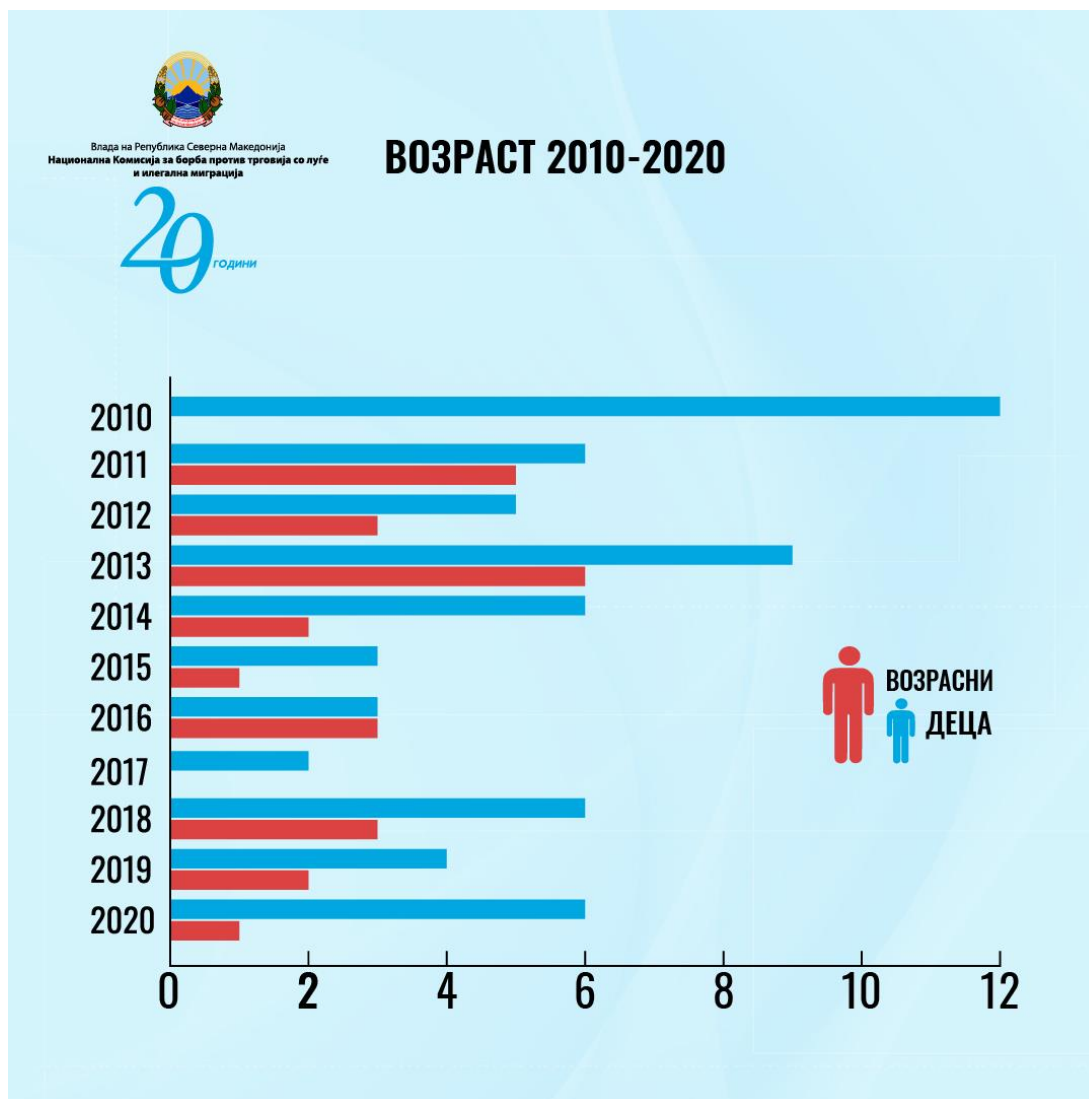
⁷⁷International organizations: The International Organization for Migration IOM Skopje within the framework of regional and national projects/activities financed by the EU, the Development Bank of the Council of Europe (CEB), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and the Kingdom of the Netherlands provided project budgets of around EUR 55,531.00, for the activities which were implemented by UNODC, 65,000 euros were provided. The total budget of the OSCE for the presented realized activities is 9,000 euros. Given that the activities are implemented within the framework of larger regional projects, the ICMPD orientation amount for the budget and implemented activities is 111,202 euros. The Council of Europe office in Skopje provided 180,000 euros through the project of the Horizontal Instrument for the Western Balkans, GIZ through the Regional Project PaCT amounts to 1,260,000 euros, with which activities were realized for the representatives of all 6 countries of the Western Balkans, including the Republic of North Macedonia. (In addition to these activities, GIZ also set aside around 17,000 euros for activities directly intended only for partners in Republic of North Macedonia).

6. PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR 2022

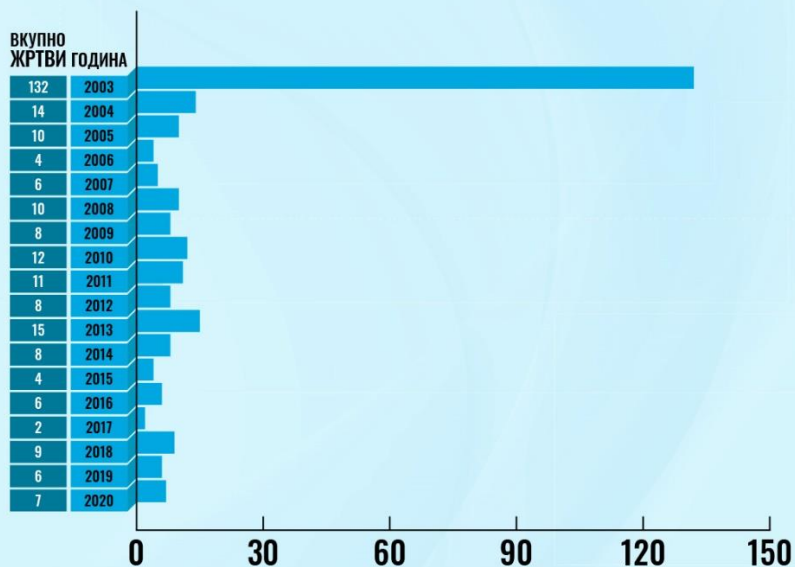
- Development of an Operational Plan with activities for 2022 in accordance with the National Action Plan 2021-2025;
- Strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation between the Commissions by concluding agreements and memoranda of cooperation;
- Continuous maintenance of the network of National Coordinators, exchange of experiences and participation in international activities;
- Strengthening the communication and coordination between the Commission and the Local Commissions for the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration;
- Setting up an Operational Team for the coordination and management of human trafficking cases;
- Provision of a new location for the Center for victims of human trafficking;
- Continuous implementation of multidisciplinary trainings at all levels in order to strengthen the capacities of professionals in order to recognize and improve the identification of victims and potential victims of THB;
- Building the capacities of the actors involved in NRM;
- Supporting the work of the 5 mobile teams for identification, referral and assistance of victims and potential victims of human trafficking;
- Revision of the SOP and Indicators for the identification of victims of trafficking in human beings;
- Strengthening the system for combating human trafficking, especially in the area of labor exploitation;
- Conclusion of a memorandum of cooperation between the Ministry of Interior and State Labour Inspectorate;
- Conclusion of a Protocol for cooperation in the field of combating human trafficking between the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Government of R. Slovenia;
- Continuous implementation of preventive activities;

Annex:

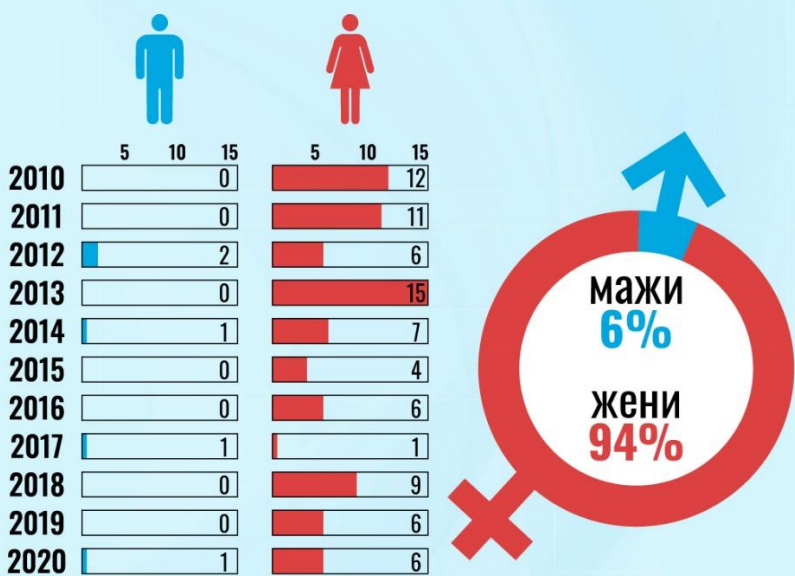
Infographics with data on victims of human trafficking made in the framework of the celebration of 20 years since the establishment of the Commission for the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration for the period 2010-2020



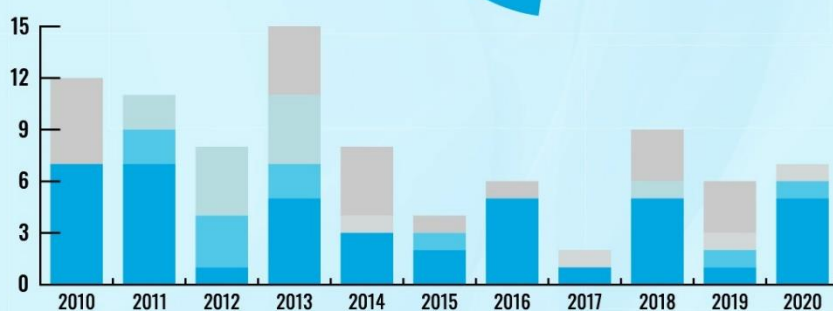
ПРЕГЛЕД НА ЖРТВИ НА ТРГОВИЈА СО ЛУЃЕ ОД ВОВЕДУВАЊЕ НА КРИВИЧНО ДЕЛО



ЕКСПЛОАТАЦИЈА СПОРЕД ПОЛ



ЖРТВИ СПОРЕД ВИД НА ЕКСПЛОАТАЦИЈА 2010-2020



ПОТЕКЛО НА ЖРТВИТЕ

- 52% Скопје
- 11% Тетово
- 9% Куманово
- 6% Гостивар
- 4% Гевгелија
- 4% Велес
- 2% Струга
- 2% Кочани
- 2% Радовиш
- 2% Штип
- 2% Кичево
- 2% Струмица
- 2% Прилеп

