



Overview

This factsheet demonstrates problems and possible solutions compiled by 16 experts of different fields as part of a “Living Lab” (round table discussion) in Athens in the following three areas:

***Identification, Investigational process,
Prosecution and Court Proceeding***

Protection and Support for Victims

***Interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation
(national and international)***





1. Identification, Investigational process, Prosecution and Court Proceeding

Problems

-  **Lack of proper identification by authorities due to existing stereotypes** (e.g. of how a victim behaves, or a lack of signs of physical violence), and due to a **lack of awareness among law enforcement personnel and frontline professionals**.
-  **Lack of resources and expertise among law enforcement agencies** impeding effective enforcement efforts.
-  **The ministerial decision defining the conditions for the legal operation of brothels** in order to effectively monitor and identify cases of trafficking in human beings **has not been issued**.
-  **Gaps in the identification of labor exploitation.**
-  **Difficulties to identify complex financial crimes.**
-  **Difficulties to investigate transnational criminal networks** that use sophisticated methods to evade detection and law enforcement efforts.
-  **Challenge of gathering accurate and timely data on human trafficking** due to the hidden nature of the crime.
-  **Challenge of victims of human trafficking to come forward** due to physical and psychological coercion exercised by traffickers.
-  **Lack of victims' willingness to cooperate** (fear of speaking out, provide specific information, and proceed with declaration) resulting in a lack of evidence, constituting a severe obstacle to successful prosecution.
-  **Lack of identification of victims due to lack of public awareness** regarding human trafficking.
-  **Gaps in the collaboration between law enforcement agencies and prosecutorial offices.**
-  It constitutes **a challenge during court proceedings to respect both the survivor's right to testify in a safe place** (outside the courtroom) **and the defendant's procedural right to question witnesses.**







Solutions

-  **Provision of enhanced training for frontline professionals** on definitions, forms of recruitment and exploitation and the concept of consent in human trafficking and developing awareness and empathy for victims.
-  **Provision of sufficient funding, staffing and specialized training for law enforcement agencies** to improve the identification and investigation of human trafficking cases, and be able to build strong cases.
-  **Issue a law or ministerial decision defining the terms and conditions for the legal operation of brothels.**
-  **Development of a targeted approach to labor exploitation:** cooperation with labor inspectorates to ensure better conditions and protection of workers and enforce labour laws, and joint efforts to identify illegal practices.
-  **Enhance collaboration among competent units to trace and prosecute complex financial crimes**, such as money laundering, fraud and corruption: Sharing of financial intelligence and expertise.
-  **Extend and intensify transnational cooperation** in order to dismantle and fight international criminal networks.
-  **Increase law enforcement agencies' access to data and intelligence**, both domestically and internationally, to successfully gather accurate and timely data and successfully investigate trafficking networks.
-  **Authorities must ensure the protection of victims at all stages** (during and after investigations), building up trust in order for the victim to feel safe enough to testify comprehensively.
-  **Improvement of service procedures for victims**, and increasing the practitioners' and authorities' awareness for victims' needs.
-  **Implementation of regular information campaigns on human trafficking by organisations offering specialized support** (with the objective to raise awareness among the public and inform about available anonymous reporting procedures).
-  **Strengthen prosecution by improving police efforts** in gathering qualitative evidence and build strong cases.
-  **Increase the use of digital technologies** to ensure victims' safety as well as the defendants' procedural rights.










2. Protection and Support for Victims

Problems

-  Victims have different needs depending, e.g. on where they are identified.
-  Lack of victim's awareness of his/her rights.
-  Lack of victims' trust in the authorities and professionals who want to help them.
-  Risk of secondary traumatization of the victim during the process of testifying to the authorities.




Solutions

-  Representatives of the **authorities** who come into contact with the victim need to **focus on building trust on the basis of respect and the time needed for recovery.**
-  **Provision of appropriate training for frontline staff** on how to communicate with potential victims of trafficking.
-  **Provision of full information to victims** regarding their rights as a victim of a crime in general as well as a trafficked person.
-  Authorities should have an **information sheet listing the rights a victim of crime** according to the Directive 2012/29/EU.
-  **Authorities should closely collaborate with mental health professionals and NGOs** who have experience in dealing with trafficking cases, and can help achieve better information from victims.
-  **Authorities should consider calling in mental health professionals or social workers when questioning the victim** in order to safeguard the testifying procedures.
-  **Provision of comprehensive (holistic) victim support services** tailored to the individual needs of a victim (**victim-centered approach**).







3. Interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation (national and international)

Problems

-  **Cooperation between all actors involved** in successfully tackling human trafficking cases must still improve.
-  **Human trafficking** is often a **transnational crime requiring international cooperation**, but there are often many challenges such as different legal frameworks, differences in law enforcement capabilities and priorities, communication gaps, limited coordination, etc.)
-  The rampancy of human trafficking and crime in general has a negative impact on society, **shattering people's trust and confidence in authorities.**

Solutions

-  **Development of synergies.**
-  **Systematization of cooperation:** Establishment of standard procedures and protocols for communication and cooperation between authorities.
-  **Exchange of information with involved stakeholders:** Regular meetings, direct communication, trust-building, exchange of methods, update on data and intelligence, etc.
-  **Further development of co-trainings.**
-  **Focus on joint investigations** that allow for the pooling of resources, expertise and specialized knowledge, resulting in more efficient and effective outcomes.
-  **Collaboration among law enforcement agencies and all stakeholders** demonstrates a united front in addressing social issues and crimes, such as human trafficking, enhancing people's trust and confidence in the justice system in general.



Final Recommendations

- to provide enhanced appropriate training for all law enforcement agencies, as well as sufficient funding and staffing*
- to issue a law or ministerial decision on the legal operation of brothels*
- to enhance collaboration among all relevant stakeholders on a national level*
- to develop synergies and collaboration internationally, e.g. through co-trainings*
- to intensify collaboration of law enforcement agencies with mental health professionals and NGOs*
- to ensure the protection of victims at all stages and ensure provision of comprehensive (holistic) victim support services*
- to implement regular public information campaigns on human trafficking*

Vision

Collaboration among law enforcement agencies and stakeholders demonstrates a united front in addressing social issues and combating crime.

Improved coordination and joint action enhance public trust, confidence and perception of the justice system's effectiveness.

Through collective efforts, the impact of crimes, exploitation, and social issues can be minimized, creating a positive change for communities.

Hellenic police officer, Athens, 12.07.2023