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Trafficking in human beings – the international dimension – National Report Sweden

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Executive Summary

The Swedish national contribution to this EMN study was compiled by experts at the Swedish EMN National Contact Point (the Swedish Migration Agency). Experts at the Government Offices of Sweden (Ministry of Justice, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Employment), the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, and the Swedish Police Authority have made contributions to the study and reviewed draft versions. The study covers the 2021-2023 period, and includes some developments from 2024.

Sweden's anti-trafficking policies include a variety of approaches and methods and its thematic priorities are in line with EU priorities. On the international level, Sweden has worked with other EU Member States in close cooperation with international stakeholders, particularly in addressing demand and trafficking in human beings for forced labour.

In the study period, Thailand (seasonal workers, prostitution, in transit to and in Sweden) and Ukraine (displaced persons, beneficiaries of temporary protection, in transit to and in Sweden) have emerged as the main targeted third countries for Sweden. Anti-trafficking measures are integrated in international dimension policy areas (development cooperation, foreign policy). In 2023, the government presented a reform agenda for foreign aid, which includes efforts against human trafficking. The government launched a new national action plan for 2024-2026 involving anti-trafficking measures.

Key government agencies such as the Migration Agency, the Gender Equality Agency and the Police Authority have taken dedicated measures to prevent, detect and protect victims of human trafficking from certain third countries, notably Thailand and Ukraine.

There is a society-wide approach in many (national) policy areas, and international anti-trafficking components are integrated in several areas. This is particularly the case for a number of inter-agency collaborations that were initiated by the government in the past few years. A multi-agency collaboration on work-related crime, lead by the Swedish Work Environment Authority, perform joint work-place inspections and the same government agencies have set up regional centres against work-related crime. The government's 2022 national strategy to counter work-related crime recognises that two of the most serious forms of work-related crime are human trafficking and human exploitation, and that they often are transnational and involve foreign national victims.

Sweden has funded (implemented) several measures aimed at addressing trafficking in human beings towards the country in third countries of origin and transit of victims, notably within the framework of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). Sweden was instrumental in developing its international joint training exercise, in the relaunch of its Handbook for embassies and diplomatic missions, and the ongoing development of its Investigation Protocol. Meanwhile, the Gender Equality Agency has funded an Assisted Voluntary Return

Programme, administered by the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Helsinki office. The programme aims to support conditions for victims of trafficking to exit exploitation and minimise the risk of re-exploitation in their country of origin. Furthermore, in the period studied, the Gender Equality Agency has launched a number of anti-trafficking information (prevention) campaigns with an international dimension. Campaigns have often targeted certain vulnerable third-country nationals, in Sweden, in transit or in their countries of origin (Ukrainians, children, migrant workers).

Bilateral cooperation with Thai authorities has intensified in the wake of a large number of cases of human trafficking for labour purposes detected among seasonal workers in Sweden. In the study period, Sweden also concluded bilateral cooperation agreements with additional countries, with the aim to fight human trafficking. Moreover, Sweden is being active and / or funding a range of activities performed by UN agencies, for example the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (UNVT) that have an anti-trafficking strand, as well as measures within the Eastern Partnership.

Turning to challenges, the Gender Equality Agency reports that migrant workers who come to Sweden often are not aware of their rights, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation and professionals do not always have knowledge about their obligation to provide support for this group. Additionally, more authorities should be tasked with identifying workers in labour exploitation. Since victims of human trafficking rarely get in contact with authorities by their own initiative to seek support and protection, outreach activity is a vital measure, stakeholders say. New approaches such as "bystander approach" have been examined. With regard to good examples, a number of the Gender Equality Agency's (preventive) information campaigns were considered to be effective and successful, for example the 2023 campaign "Before you go" (with the aim to provide information and support to migrant workers before their departure to Sweden). Finally, national experts have highlighted Sweden's role in developing and supporting the relaunch of the CBSS Handbook for embassies and diplomatic missions.

Finally, and with regard to future policy developments, the government has announced that the position as Special Envoy against human trafficking and exploitation will be re-established within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Sammanfattning på svenska

Det svenska bidraget till denna EMN-studie sammanställdes av experter vid Sveriges nationella kontaktpunkt för EMN (Migrationsverket). Experter vid regeringskansliet (Justitiedepartementet, Utrikesdepartementet, Näringsdepartementet), Jämställdhetsmyndigeten och Polismyndigheten har bidragit till studien och sett över utkast. Studien omfattar perioden 2021–2023 och viss utveckling under 2024.

Sveriges policy för att bekämpa människohandel består av flera olika åtgärder och angreppssätt och de tematiska prioriteringarna är i linje med EU:s. På internationell nivå har Sverige arbetat med andra EU-länder i nära samarbete med internationella aktörer, särskilt när det gäller att motverka efterfrågan samt människohandel i syfte att exploatera arbetskraft.

Under studieperioden har Thailand (säsongsarbetare, prostitution, personer i transit till och i Sverige) och Ukraina (personer på flykt, personer som fått tillfälligt skydd, personer i transit till och i Sverige) framtonat som de prioriterade länderna för svenska insatser. Åtgärder för att bekämpa människohandel är integrerade i politikområden med en internationell dimension (utvecklingsbistånd, utrikespolitik). Under 2023 presenterade regeringen en reformagenda för utvecklingsbiståndet som omfattar åtgärder mot människohandel. Regeringen lanserade också en ny handlingsplan för 2024–2026 som innehåller åtgärder mot människohandel.

Speciellt berörda myndigheter som Migrationsverket, Jämställdhetsmyndigheten och Polismyndigheten har gjort riktade insatser för att förhindra och upptäcka människohandel och skydda offer för människohandel från tredje land, särskilt Thailand och Ukraina.

Det finns ett brett samhällsperspektiv inom flera (nationella) politikområden, och internationellt riktade åtgärder mot människohandel är integrerade inom flera av dessa. Detta gäller inte minst ett antal myndighetssamarbeten som regeringen initierat under senare år. Inom en myndighetssamverkan mot arbetslivskriminalitet som leds av Arbetsmiljöverket genomförs gemensamma arbetsplatsinspektioner och samma myndigheter har etablerat regionala centra mot arbetslivskriminalitet. Regeringens strategi mot arbetslivskriminalitet från 2022 understryker att människohandel och arbetskraftsexploatering är två av de mest allvarliga formerna av arbetslivskriminalitet, och att de ofta är gränsöverskridande och med utländska offer.

Sverige har finansierat (implementerat) flera insatser med syfte att motverka människohandel av personer på väg mot Sverige med ursprung i tredje länder och i transit, speciellt inom ramen för Östersjöstaternas råd (CBSS). Sverige har haft en avgörande betydelse i utvecklingen av rådets internationella samövning, nylanseringen av dess handbok för ambassader och diplomatiska beskickningar och det pågående arbetet med dess utredningsprotokoll. Samtidigt har Jämställdhetsmyndigheten finansierat Återvändandeprogrammet Människohandel - Prostitution (ÅMP), som administreras av Helsingfors-kontoret

för International Organization for Migration (IOM). Programmet syftar till att stärka förutsättningarna för offer för människohandel att komma ur exploatering och minska risken för återexploatering i deras ursprungsländer.

Jämställdhetsmyndigheten har därutöver varit ansvarig för ett antal informationskampanjer med en internationell dimension i syfte att förhindra människohandel. Dessa kampanjer har ofta fokuserat på utsatta tredjelandsmedborgare som befinner sig i Sverige, i transit eller i sina ursprungsländer (ukrainare, barn, arbetskraftsinvandrare).

Sveriges bilaterala samarbete med myndigheter i Thailand har blivit tätare i och med det stora antalet upptäckta fall av människohandel (arbetskraftsexploatering) bland säsongsarbetare i Sverige. Under studieperioden har Sverige också ingått bilaterala samarbetsavtal med fler länder i syfte att bekämpa människohandel. Sverige är dessutom aktivt och / eller finansierar olika aktiviteter som genomförs av FN-organ, till exempel United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) och United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (UNVT), där insatser mot människohandel igår, liksom åtgärder inom det östliga partnerskapet.

Vad gäller utmaningar konstaterar Jämställdhetsmyndigheten att arbetskraftsinvandrare som kommer till Sverige sällan är medvetna om sina rättigheter, vilket gör att de lätt kan bli utsatta för exploatering, och myndighetspersoner och andra yrkesverksamma har inte alltid kännedom om sin roll för att stödja denna grupp. Flera myndigheter borde dessutom få i uppdrag att upptäcka arbetskraftsexploatering. Eftersom offer för människohandel sällan kontaktar myndigheterna på eget initiativ för att få stöd och skydd är uppsökande aktiviteter av stor betydelse enligt experter på området. Nya arbetsmetoder (”bystander approach”) har provats. Gällande goda exempel har ett antal av Jämställdhetsmyndighetens (förebyggande) informationskampanjer bedömts vara effektiva och framgångsrika, till exempel kampanjen ”Before you go” från 2023 (med syfte att informera och stödja arbetskraftsinvandrare innan deras avresa till Sverige). Nationella experter har också pekat på Sveriges viktiga roll i att bidra och stödja utvecklingen och återlanseringen av Östersjöstaternas råds (CBSS) handbok för ambassader och diplomatiska beskickningar.

Avslutningsvis och med avseende på framtiden har regeringen aviserat att uppdraget som ambassadör mot människohandel åter ska tillsättas inom Utrikesdepartementet.

1. Background and rationale for the study

As shown in the reports on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings published by the European Commission,[1] every year, over 7 000 victims of trafficking in human beings are registered in the European Union (EU). On average, 45 per cent of the victims are non-EU citizens.[2] However, the latest data show that over 10.000 victims of trafficking were identified in the EU in 2022 and that 63 per cent of them were third-country nationals.[3] This change in trends show even more the importance of the international dimension of trafficking in human beings.

In several EU Member States, most victims are third-country nationals, and victims and traffickers are often of the same nationality. Some third-country national victims of trafficking are smuggled to the EU for the purpose of being trafficked by organised crime groups or networks which operate across borders. The debts incurred to finance their travel to the EU make them particularly vulnerable. Others are trafficked along their journey towards the EU. Some victims reach the EU via regular migration pathways, sometimes pursuing apparently legitimate job offers, and then fall into the hands of traffickers once in the EU. This shows the link between trafficking in human beings and both legal and irregular migration. In addition to the registered victims, many more remain undetected. This affects especially third-country nationals, as they face additional barriers to identification.[4]

The **EU Strategy on combatting trafficking in human beings 2021-2025**[5] highlights the need for a comprehensive response to tackle the trafficking phenomenon that combines legal, policy and operational initiatives. Its four main pillars concern: 1) prevention; 2) protection, assistance, and support to victims; 3) the law enforcement response (investigation, prosecution and conviction of traffickers); and 4) the international dimension of trafficking in human beings, which is the focus of this study. This last pillar highlights the importance of applying the first three priorities of the Strategy – breaking the criminal business model of traffickers, reducing demand, and protecting and empowering victims – to EU policies and measures addressing the international dimension of this crime.

[1] European Commission, Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings-fourth report, 2019-2020.
[2] Statistics and trends in trafficking in human beings in EU in 2019-2020
[3] European Commission, Newly released data show an increase of trafficking in human beings, Newly released data show an increase of trafficking in human beings - European Commission (europa.eu), last accessed on 13 June 2024.
[4] European Commission, Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings-fourth report, 2019-2020.
[5] European Commission: EU Strategy on combatting trafficking in human beings 2021-2025, COM(2021) 171 final.

Under this study, the **international dimension of trafficking in human beings** refers to EMN Member and Observer Countries' efforts to address trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals towards their countries:

a) in third countries of origin and transit of victims (and potential victims);
b) in their countries, where these efforts have an international component e.g. imply involvement/cooperation with international partners, cross-border activities, target specific third-country nationalities/victims from certain regions.[6]

Data on trafficking in the EU is e.g. available through Progress Reports,[7] Eurostat data, information provided by Europol, and outcomes of EMPACT operational actions. There is also some available data on human trafficking at global level from international reports (e.g. UNODC Global Reports,[8] GRETA Reports[9]).

However, the wide number of stakeholders involved in anti-trafficking actions – even within each country – makes it difficult to delineate a comprehensive overview of all EU and national efforts to address the international dimension of trafficking in human beings. This study therefore aims to fill this gap by gathering information from different national stakeholders (e.g. ministries of migration, foreign affairs, interior, where relevant security etc.) on policies and measures adopted to address the international dimension of trafficking in human beings and existing cooperation with third countries and international organisations on this issue. It also aims to identify challenges and good practices and provide an overview of the main results achieved in this context.

2.EU legal and policy context

The EU's competence to act in relation to trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals is related to the fact that this is recognised as a serious form of cross-border crime (Article 83 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)) and, as regards third-country nationals, a phenomenon linked to migration (Article 79(2) TFEU). The EU legislative framework on trafficking in human beings is governed by Directive 2011/36/EU (EU Anti-Trafficking

[6] These types of efforts may include (but not exhaustive) e.g. policies specifically targeting third-country nationals; awareness raising campaigns developed in cooperation with third countries or targeting specific third-country nationalities, diplomatic missions etc.; initiatives involving the diaspora to combat trafficking in human beings; the establishment of trans-national referral mechanisms; support for the voluntary return of third-country national victims; joint investigations/actions with third countries; secondment of law enforcement authorities from third countries.
[7] European Commission, Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings – Publications, last accessed on 2 May 2024.
[8] UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, last accessed on 2 May 2024.
[9] Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), GRETA - Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (coe.int), last accessed on 2 May 2024.

Directive)[10] as recently amended by Directive (EU) 2024/1712.[11] The Directive establishes minimum rules for the definition of criminal offences for trafficking in human beings and related penalties. Adopting a victim-centred approach, and taking into account gender, disability and children's perspectives, its provisions aim to strengthen the prevention of trafficking and the assistance and protection to victims.

In December 2022, the European Commission presented a legislative proposal to strengthen existing rules. **Directive (EU) 2024/1712**[12] **amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims** was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.[13] It also provides for new forms of exploitation, adding the exploitation of surrogacy, forced marriage and illegal adoption as new forms of exploitation to the trafficking definition, including those that take place online. The Directive also explicitly addresses online sexual exploitation which can become an aggravating circumstance. The revised Directive requires EU Member States to strengthen the tools for law enforcement and judicial authorities to investigate and prosecute this crime and ensures better protection and support of the victims. To improve early identification of victims and referral to support and assistance, the new law requires the formal establishment of National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs). Concerning third-country nationals, it also calls upon anti-trafficking authorities to establish cooperation with asylum authorities to ensure their respective procedures do not exclude one another.

The **EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025**,[14] adopted in April 2021, provides for a comprehensive response to combatting trafficking in human beings. It identifies four main priority areas: 1) reducing the demand that fosters trafficking; 2) breaking the criminal model to halt victims' exploitation, both online and offline; 3) protecting, supporting and empowering the victims, especially women and children; 4) addressing the international dimension through cooperation with the third countries of origin and transit, and with international organisations.

Measures proposed under the first three pillars also apply to non-EU nationals. Under the third pillar on supporting victims of trafficking, special attention is given to the vulnerabilities experienced by third-country nationals (and especially children) due to their precarious legal situation. The fourth pillar calls for stepping up cooperation with third countries of origin and transit of victims and international organisations. Within the international dimension, the strategy extends to the Union's external action, including in the field of migration, the

[10] Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA (Anti-Trafficking Directive, Directive 2011/36/EU), last accessed on 4 September 2024.
[11] Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, last accessed on 4 September 2024.
[12] Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, last accessed on 4 September 2024.
[13] Member States have two years from the entry into force to transpose the new provisions into national law.
[14] European Commission, 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021- 2025', last accessed on 29 October 2024.

aims of reducing demand, breaking criminal models and protecting and empowering victims.

The Pact on Migration and Asylum, adopted in May 2024, introduced stronger safeguards for vulnerable groups, including victims of trafficking in human beings. For example, in the **recast Reception Conditions Directive (EU) 2024/1346**,[15] victims of trafficking in human beings are now listed as applicants with special reception needs (Article 25) and shall be provided by public authorities the necessary medical and psychological treatment and care, including rehabilitation services and counselling where necessary (Article 28). The **Qualification Regulation (EU) 2024/1347**,[16] replacing the Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU,[17] calls upon Member States to take account of the special needs of vulnerable categories of protection applicants, including trafficking victims (Article 20). The new **Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (EU) 2024/1351** (Recitals 47, 61, Article 22(6), Article 23(4)(c))[18] and the **Asylum Procedure Regulation (EU) 2024/1348** (Article 13(7)(a))[19] instruct EU Member States to ensure staff from the competent authorities are sufficiently trained to identify and assess the needs of victims of trafficking in human beings within vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied minors. Finally, the **Screening Regulation (EU) 2024/1356** (Articles 8(9) and 12) prescribes the involvement of national authorities in charge of detecting and identifying victims of trafficking in human beings in the screening procedure (the preliminary vulnerability check).[20] Additionally, the **EU Asylum Agency (EUAA)** actively supports EU Member States with the implementation of the Pact, through dedicated training, guidance and practical tools.[21]

[15] Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast) (Reception Conditions Directive (EU) 2024/1346), last accessed on 28 August 2024.
[16] Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted, amending Council Directive 2003/109/EC and repealing Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, (Qualification Regulation (EU) 2024/1347), last accessed on 14 August 2024.
[17] Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU), last accessed on 4 September 2024.
[18] Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1147 and (EU) 2021/1060 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 (Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (EU) 2024/1351), last accessed on 2 September 2024.
[19] Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU, (Asylum Procedure Regulation (EU) 2024/1348), last accessed on 2 September 2024.
[20] Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 introducing the Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 introducing the screening of third-country nationals at the external borders and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817, (Screening Regulation (EU) 2024/1356), last accessed on 22 August 2024.
[21] European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), last accessed on 7 March 2025.

3. Primary questions to be addressed by the study

This EMN study seeks to address six primary research questions:

- What policies and measures are in place at EU and national level to address the international dimension of trafficking in human beings?
- To what extent are anti-trafficking components mainstreamed in other policy areas (border management, asylum, migrant smuggling and irregular migration, fundamental rights, gender equality, organised crime and its online dimension)?
- How do EMN Member and Observer Countries cooperate with third countries and international organisations to address the international dimension of trafficking in human beings?
- Which are the main good practices and challenges identified by EMN Member and Observer Countries when addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings?
- Which are the main outcomes achieved by EMN Member and Observer Countries when addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings?
- Have EMN Member and Observer countries identified any needs in their responses to the international dimension of trafficking in human beings and if so, how are they planning to address these needs?

4. Definitions

The following key terms are used in the report. The definitions are taken from the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary,[22] unless specified otherwise in footnotes.

Term	Definition
Detection of a victim of trafficking in human beings	The process of identifying a possible situation of trafficking in human beings.

[22] EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary, EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary, last accessed on 2 May 2024.

Term	Definition
Fundamental rights	Universal legal guarantees without which individuals and groups cannot secure their fundamental freedoms and human dignity and which apply equally to every human being regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status as per the legal system of a country without any conditions.
Human rights	Agreed international standards that recognise and protect the dignity and integrity of every individual, without any distinction.
Identification of a victim of trafficking in human beings	The process of confirming and characterising a situation of trafficking in human beings for further implementation of support.
Identified victim of trafficking in human beings	A person who has been formally identified as a victim of trafficking in human beings according to the relevant formal authority in Member States.
International dimension of trafficking in human beings[23]	Under this study, the international dimension of trafficking in human beings refers to EMN Member and Observer Countries' efforts to address trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals towards their countries: a) in third countries of origin and transit of victims (and potential victims);b) in their countries, where these efforts have an international component e.g. imply involvement/cooperation with international partners, cross-border activities, target specific third-country nationalities/victims from certain regions.
Irregular migrant	In the global context, a person who, owing to irregular entry, breach of a condition of entry or the expiry of their legal basis for entering and residing, lacks legal status in a transit or host country.
Irregular migration	Movement of persons to a new place of residence or transit that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries.
National referral/cooperation mechanisms	Mechanism aimed at identifying, protecting and assisting victims of trafficking in human

[23] Definition prepared for the purpose of this EMN study based on the approach taken by the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025 when covering the international dimension of trafficking in human beings.

Term	Definition
	beings, through referral, and involving relevant public authorities and civil society.[24]
Organised crime	Large-scale and complex illicit activities carried out by an organised criminal group.
Organised criminal group	A structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting cooperatively with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences.
Palermo Protocol	A United Nations (UN) protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols.
Potential victim of trafficking in human beings	A person vulnerable to trafficking in human beings.[25]
Presumed victim of trafficking in human beings	A person who has met the criteria of EU regulations and international Conventions but has not been formally identified by the relevant authorities (e.g. police) as a trafficking victim or has declined to be formally or legally identified as victim of trafficking.
Protection of *(presumed/identified)* victims of trafficking in human beings	The action of national authorities aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of (presumed) victims of trafficking in human beings.[26]
Reintegration	Re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person into a group or a process, e.g. of a migrant into the society of their country of return.
Registered victim of trafficking in human beings	A person who is either an identified or a presumed victim of human trafficking and has been registered by authorities and/or other agencies and organisations.[27]
Smuggling of migrants	The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the irregular entry of a person

[24] Article 11(4) of the Anti-trafficking Directive lays down an obligation on Member States the take the necessary measures to establish appropriate mechanisms aimed at the early identification of, assistance to and support for victims, in cooperation with relevant support organisations.
[25] Definition inspired by IOM, Migrants and their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour, 2019, last accessed 26 February 2025.
[26] Definition inspired by the Anti-trafficking Directive, Article 11. A person shall be provided with assistance and support as soon as the competent authorities have a reasonable-grounds indication for believing that the person might have been subjected to trafficking in human beings.
[27] Definition inspired by the European Commission, Data collection on trafficking in human beings in the EU, 2020.

Term	Definition
	into a (UN) Member State of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.
Trafficking in human beings	The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. [28]
Voluntary Return	The assisted or independent return to the country of origin, transit or third country, based on the free will of the returnee.
Vulnerable person	Minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of trafficking in human beings, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation.

5. Introduction and mapping of Sweden's policies and measures

It is the firm conviction of the Swedish government that human trafficking must be combated with a variety of approaches and methods. This applies to both domestic and cross-border human trafficking. Sweden's thematic priorities are in line with EU priorities:

- Prevention
- Reducing demand
- Combating the business model of human traffickers through effective operational means against the criminal business model, to combat the culture of impunity by building capacity for a robust criminal justice response
- Improving the ability to detect victims of human trafficking
- Protection and support for victims

[28] Definition established by the Anti-trafficking Directive, Article 2 par.1.

The importance of combating trafficking in human beings needs to remain high on the international agenda. In 2023, Sweden, together with France, continued to cooperate closely with relevant international actors such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) regarding the obligation to address demand (following art 9.5 of the UN Palermo Protocol). During the Swedish EU presidency in 2023, a priority for the government was to highlight the work against the demand that fosters trafficking in human beings. On 29-30 March 2023, the Swedish Presidency hosted a conference on prevention models to address the demand that fosters trafficking for sexual purposes. The conference gathered experts from EU Member States, international organisations, civil society as well as survivors and emphasised the importance and joint obligation to tackle demand. It also focused on the human trafficking situation following the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Sweden also has a strong focus on targeting trafficking in human beings for forced labour. For example, on 7–8 December 2023, the National Coordination against Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings (NSPM) at the Gender Equality Agency together with the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) organised **The European Forum against Human Trafficking for Forced Labour and Labour Exploitation** in Stockholm. The forum approached the issue of labour exploitation from a broad perspective and gathered decision-makers from the national level and EU level, including trade union representatives.

5.1 Specific third countries, geographic regions or third-country nationalities targeted

Thailand and **Ukraine** were the main third countries targeted in the period with regard to the degree and level of national and joint efforts (bilateral, multilateral and / or between different stakeholders) and the number of potential victims of human trafficking from these two third countries.[29]

In the period, Thailand has been targeted particularly in relation to the high numbers of victims of human trafficking for the purpose of work exploitation encountered among seasonal workers (berry pickers) to Sweden, which have been detected both in migration procedures and after arrival in Sweden. Additionally, high numbers of Thai migrant women in Sweden have been detected to be victims of human trafficking for sexual purposes. Meanwhile, Ukraine has been targeted in relation to the increased number of victims of human trafficking among those finding refuge in, or in transit to, Sweden and other EU Member States due to Russia's full-scale invasion of the country.[30]

Moreover, Sweden has recently announced thematic priorities in development cooperation that include combating human trafficking in particular regions. In

[29] The main third countries targeted may vary somewhat between the key government agencies involved. For example, the main third countries targeted by the Migration Agency in the 2021-2023 period were **Nigeria, Vietnam, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Thailand**. These third countries had the highest number of detected potential victims in migration procedures and hence more checks were performed in these groups of applicants.
[30] Ukraine was the second most common country of origin for detected potential victims in 2022 and the most common third country, whereas it was the fifth most common in 2021. Swedish Police Authority: Människohandel för sexuella och andra ändamål - lägesrapport 24 (2022), last accessed 7 October 2024.

March 2024, the government adopted the **Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa 2024–2027**. Under the heading / results area "Migration and return", one of the objectives are: "Enhanced capacity to manage migration, focusing on counteracting irregular migration, strengthening asylum management and combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking." The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) is currently operationalizing the strategy, including the portfolio of contributions intended to implement this strategy in the period 2024-2027.[31]

Sweden is participating in IOM's five-year project **Enhancing Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking in Asia (CREST Project)**, which aims to improve the conditions for migrant workers in Asia by strengthening the capacity of private sector actors' value chains in Asia, to recruit and hire in accordance with international praxis for ethical recruitment. The project aims to hinder the vulnerable situation that many women face in labour migration, such as indebtedness due to high recruitment fees, lack of right to healthcare in the country of destination and weak rights in relation to the employer. As the recruitment firms have an important role, IOM will map and train these to adhere to international principles for ethical recruitment. One of the core principles is that the recruitment fee should be absorbed by the company that employs, and not borne by the migrant worker. International companies that source from Asian suppliers are expected to be engaged in the project and contribute with resources to strengthen the capacity of its suppliers. The aim is to establish ethical recruitment practices that are expected to lead to that more migrating women and men have better access to safe recruitment channels and are not exposed to exploitation, violation or indebted when moving to seek work at another destination.

Sweden also gives financial support for **preventive work against human trafficking for sexual exploitation** to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (UNVTF) to support projects all over the world with a strong focus on poor countries with the target group women, children and men exposed to human trafficking. CAP International works with knowledge support and projects to counter human trafficking for sexual purposes in order to strengthen legislation in the area, counter demand and the vulnerability of women and girls and enable exit.

Sida is funding a programme regarding the facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility in **Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia**. Along the eastern route, migrants face several life-threatening risks. The programme aims to provide humanitarian and lifesaving assistance to vulnerable migrants in transit countries and facilitate the voluntary return of vulnerable migrants that include women and girls, victims of trafficking, victims of violence, and people with disabilities. Furthermore, the programme aims to find durable solutions for migrant through the provision of tailored individual reintegration assistance to returnees and the legalisation of migrants in host countries. The intervention will also support community stabilisation projects targeting both communities of origin and transit. In countries of origin, community stabilisation projects will focus on creating employment and livelihood opportunities in

[31] The information in this and forthcoming paragraphs was provided by the Government Offices of Sweden and Sida.

communities affected by climate change, reaching a larger number of beneficiaries, and complementing the individual reintegration assistance.

5.2 Specific policies addressing trafficking in human beings towards Sweden in third countries of origin and transit of victims

One of several areas in the government strategy for **Sweden's development cooperation for global gender equality and the rights of women and girls 2022-2026** is combating gender-based violence including human trafficking for sexual purposes.

In December 2023, the government presented a reform agenda for foreign aid, **Aid for a New Era - Freedom, Empowerment, and Sustainable Growth**. The reform agenda outlines the new direction for Swedish foreign aid. One of the thematic priorities of the agenda is to support efforts against all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation in prostitution and human trafficking, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and forced sterilisation.

5.3 Specific policies addressing trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals in Sweden

At the national level, the ten-year national **Strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women 2017–2026** is the guiding framework for Sweden's policy, national work and coordination in this field, including preventing and combating prostitution and trafficking.[32] The strategy does not specifically address third-country nationals. In June 2024, the government presented a **new action plan** for the period 2024–2026, involving anti-trafficking measures. Inter alia, the plan built upon six dedicated round tables with civil society organisations, academia and public authorities for feedback and inputs in spring and autumn of 2023.[33]

Among the government agencies involved to fight human trafficking, the Migration Agency has implemented measures to meet the international dimension of trafficking in human beings. These measures include the identification of the most common countries of origin of potential victims of human trafficking. The main third countries targeted by the Migration Agency in the 2021-2023 period were **Nigeria, Vietnam, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Thailand**. These third countries had the highest number of potential victims in migration procedures and hence more checks were performed in these groups of applicants. This information is very important for the ability of case officers in migration procedures (international protection procedures, legal migration procedures) to detect potential victims among third-country nationals. The Migration Agency's Centre for country-of-origin information and analysis highlights the risk for trafficking in human beings in their compiled thematic reports.

[32] Government Offices of Sweden: En nationell strategi för att förebygga och bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor Skr. 2016/17:10, last accessed 29 September 2024.
[33] Government Offices of Sweden: Fri och trygg utan våld och förtryck: Åtgärdsprogram för att förebygga och bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor, våld i nära relationer och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck - Regeringen.se, 20 June 2024, last accessed 8 October 2024.

Furthermore, the Police Authority[34] has taken several different measures that particularly target certain groups of third-country nationals, including Thai nationals in the light of the high numbers of (potential) victims of human trafficking from this country. A large group are women from Thailand who are trafficked for sexual exploitation and are recruited into the massage business in Sweden. There are also examples of Thai women that already are located in Sweden who are recruited within their diaspora. Police intelligence shows that agencies with connection to criminal networks arrange for the recruitment and travel arrangements in Thailand. Additionally, a majority of (potential) victims of trafficking detected during the berry-picking season in northern Sweden have been Thai nationals.

Actions by the Police Authority to tackle massage institutes involved in prostitution include:

- **Project SIAM** – the Police region of Stockholm has performed multi-agency inspections in a large number of massage parlours in order to detect prostitution and economic crime such as tax offences
- An **extensive report** which maps the frequency of massage institutes and prostitution and the connection with organised crime was released (2020-2023). It states that about 80 per cent of all Thai massage parlours provide sexual services and that many of the exploited women are recruited to Sweden via criminal networks. Interviewed buyers informed the Police Authority that they preferred to buy sexual services in parlours since the risk of being discovered would be lower there as opposed to in an apartment brothel
- **Civil society actions** to strengthen and secure serious massage institutes through quality labelling and strengthening the positive entrepreneurship in the Thai community through organisations such as Thai Wise and Thai Growth (Växtkraft Thai)[35]

Furthermore, the Police Authority has employed **new visual techniques** in an attempt to bridge language difficulties in first contacts with potential victims. Video clips in, inter alia Thai and Dari, identifying some of the most common

[34] Information on the Police Authority's measures primarily builds on its contribution to the Fifth Progress Report on the Progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2021-2023). The report contributes to the monitoring of the implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, of the EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025) and the Common Anti-Trafficking Plan.
[35] ThaiWISE ThaiWISE is here for you - ThaiWISE, last accessed 29 September 2024. ThaiWISE - Thai Women in Sweden Empowerment. This project aims to strengthen Thai women's position in society and give them the tools to change their life situation. ThaiWISE works closely with the Swedish Embassy in Thailand to reduce the risks for Thai women who plan to immigrate to Sweden. ThaiWISE has launched a certifying programme for massage parlours in Sweden in which companies are informed about laws and rules applied in Sweden regarding their business. Customers of a certified parlour are reassured that the employees are working on fair contracts and trained in Nuad Thai (traditional Thai massage). Växtkraft Thai: Växtkraft Thai is set to strenghten the Thai massage industry and prevent sex purchases | Realstars, last accessed 29 September 2024. The purpose of the project is to give young Thai women who work in the Thai massage salons with the risk of being, or already are located in prostitution, human trafficking or other vulnerable situations an opportunity to get out from this with the possibility of alternative life paths, personal development, skills enhancement in different professions and empowerment.

trafficking situations for each group have been produced to facilitate the initial contact between the victim and the Police Authority when there are linguistic barriers. Patrolling officers have access to these videos on their personal mobile phone when they are on duty.

In 2023, the concept of **national teams** was initiated at the Police Authority. In Sweden, resources allocated to combat trafficking are widely spread in a large geographical area with variating population. Sweden's northern region, which is the most extensive geographical area, is least populated, which also means a low number of officials in law enforcement. The national team, a group of specialised investigators, are able to assist in regions with seasonal trafficking or an unexpected large number of trafficking victims and / or in complex cases. During the berry-picking season in 2023, the national team assisted the northern region in a trafficking case with multiple victims (many of which were third-country nationals), which is still under investigation.

With regard to **Ukrainian** nationals, women are often recruited online to prostitution and managed by agencies behind call-centres. An **operational task force** between the Baltic Sea states was launched in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Its purpose is to enhance intelligence on Ukrainian victims and prevention as well as intervention in mutual cases involving victims from Ukraine.

With regard to legal developments, amendments to the Aliens Act were made in 2022 allowing also **Social welfare committees** to apply for a residence permit for recovery and reflection on behalf of potential victims of human trafficking or human exploitation.[36] [37] The reflection period is a 30-day temporary residence permit providing victims of trafficking with a right to recover and consider their potential participation in a criminal proceeding. The reflection period is an important step in the support and protection process and is independent of a victim's will or interest in participating in a criminal proceeding. EU nationals are also eligible to apply to the reflection period, but a vast majority are third-country nationals.

To support the utilisation of this new legal provision for a reflection period in practice, the government commissioned the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Gender Equality Agency to disseminate information and support the capacity building of Social Welfare Committees on the topic of human trafficking including information about the legal amendments. The two agencies were asked to report to the government by the end of March 2024. Their report includes, inter alia, information on the authorities' development of a fact sheet on the reflection period and human trafficking and the presentation produced intended for social services to use to inform relevant staff.

5.4 Interconnections between national policies addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings and other policy areas

Arguably, there is a society-wide approach in many policy areas, and anti-trafficking components are integrated in several policy areas. This is particularly

[36] Aliens Act (2005:716), Chapter 5, section 15, second paragraph.
[37] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Betänketid | NSPM (jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se), last accessed 25 September 2024.

the case for a number of **inter-agency collaborations** that were initiated by the government in the past few years. Some of these started as projects, but have subsequently become permanent.

The government has commissioned the Work Environment Authority to coordinate **joint authority controls** of nine agencies that combat fraud, violations of statutes and work-related crime. This collaboration includes the Public Employment Service, the Work Environment Authority, the Economic Crime Authority, the Social Insurance Agency, the Gender Equality Agency, the Migration Agency, the Police Authority, the Tax Agency, and the Prosecution Authority.[38] These authorities also plan and carry out on-site inspections at workplaces jointly or independently. Overall, the monitoring is carried out on a risk-based basis and not based in which workers are in the workplace, for example seasonal workers, posted workers from the EU / EES or locally hired workers. However, the collaboration aims at benefitting all participating agencies and both the Migration Agency and the border police (the Police Authority) target work places with suspected workers in illegal employment, many of which are third-country nationals. The collaboration effort's objectives to target trafficking in human beings and labour exploitation were recently strengthened.

Seasonal work, especially the green industries, has been acknowledged to be a risk sector for work related crime and is therefore one of the targeted sectors for inspections.

In 2022-2023, the nine agencies mentioned above coordinated by the Work Environment Authority, have been tasked to establish seven **regional centres against work-related crime** in which representatives of each authority are present. All regional centres are now up and running. The centres function as hubs for the authorities' planning, implementation, and follow-up of joint activities, with a focus on joint controls between the authorities.

On 1 July 2022, the government furthermore presented a **national strategy with 45 measures to counter work-related crime**. Several of the measures have a bearing on the work against human trafficking and labour exploitation. The national strategy makes it clear that two of the most serious forms of work-related crime are human trafficking and human exploitation. Trafficking in human beings is often international and cross-border and the victims are mainly people from other countries.[39]

Turning to some specific measures employed by government agencies, the Migration Agency reports that the **operational anti-trafficking measures** adopted are used in all procedures within the agency. Potential victims of human trafficking can be identified in asylum procedures as well as in legal migration procedures (for example work permit procedures), and in visa applications etc. The Migration Agency's coordinator against human trafficking works closely with

[38] The website of the Work Environment Agency has comprehensive information on this inter-agency collaboration including information on the role / tasks of each participating government agency, and links for further information on their respective websites, annual progress reports, reports on joint inspections and related measures and dissemination activities. The purpose of the latter is to increase the knowledge of stakeholders, e.g. politicians, social partners and other public authorities. More information at: Så jobbar myndigheterna mot arbetslivskriminalitet - Arbetsmiljöverket (av.se), last accessed 29 September 2024.
[39] Government Offices of Sweden: Nationell strategi mot arbetslivskriminalitet (regeringen.se), 1 July 2022, last accessed 28 September 2024.

some of the national multi-agency networks that employ a holistic approach (the inter-agency collaboration on work related crime, on organised crime, and on crimes against national security etc.), but also with the intra-agency network for gender mainstreaming. In that way, anti-trafficking policies are mainstreamed in several other policy areas within the Migration Agency.

Finally, some developments are under way in **border management** that have a bearing on third-country nationals. In order to equip the border police with the right tools, the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings (the Police Authority) is developing a **handbook**, aimed to raise awareness about the vulnerable situation of migrants in crossing borders, and a checklist on how to detect and intervene in trafficking situations.

5.5 Funding or implementation of measures aimed at addressing trafficking in human beings towards Sweden in third countries of origin and transit of victims

In 2023, Sweden took part in an **international joint training exercise** organised by the OSCE and CBSS. Five countries participated in a weeklong simulation exercise, which took place in Brühl (Germany), focusing on trafficking in human beings for sexual purposes and forced labour.[40] Sweden made a significant contribution to the simulation exercise by contributing in the preparatory work throughout the year. The multinational group that managed and planned the simulation consisted of ten experts of which two represented Sweden (from the Migration Agency and the Prosecution Authority). The experts built the simulation together and created an environment that focused on, inter alia, streamlining cross-border anti-trafficking work.

Throughout the reporting period, the Gender Equality Agency has funded an **Assisted Voluntary Return Programme (AVRR)**, administered by IOM's Helsinki office. The programme aims to support conditions for victims of trafficking to exit exploitation and minimise the risk of re-exploitation in the country of origin.[41] The Gender Equality Agency has funded the programme, as per government assignments, on an annual basis throughout the reporting period. In 2021, the Gender Equality Agency allocated SEK 3,936,000 to the programme, in 2022 SEK 4,301,000 and in 2023 SEK 3,959,000.

Furthermore, in 2023, the Gender Equality Agency has had a close dialogue with IOM regarding reports on return and reintegration with the objective for the Gender Equality Agency to gain better insight into the conditions for the practical implementation of AVRR in various return countries. This extended follow-up work, which began in 2022, has contributed to IOM also following up on the recipients' perspective on the support given. Most of the recipients are satisfied with the support.

Specifically with regard to provision of information to victims, new information materials on the AVRR were produced in 2023 by IOM in collaboration with the Gender Equality Agency and the regional coordinators. IOM has also produced new application documents. Additionally, the Migration Agency's legal

[40] Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS): Learning by doing: anti-trafficking practitioners across the Baltic Sea Region take part in week-long regional simulation training – CBSS, last accessed 26 September 2024.
[41] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Återvändandeprogrammet | NSPM (jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se), last accessed 26 September 2024.

department relaxed its guidelines regarding departure conditions for returnees included in AVRR in 2023 as a result of the collaboration meeting organised by the Gender Equality Agency the previous year. The new information material and application documents facilitate the application procedure, and will help the beneficiaries in becoming fully informed of what AVRR can offer. The new guidelines from the Migration Agency provide better conditions for planning a good return and support.

On 18-19 September 2024, the CBSS launched the development of an **Investigation Protocol on Trafficking in Human Beings for the Baltic Sea Region and Ukraine** during a workshop in Stockholm. The event brought together investigators from law enforcement agencies across the region and Ukraine, Europol, and Frontex, to address challenges and regional best practices in investigating human trafficking, particularly regarding cross-border cases and cooperation.

The protocol aims to enhance cross-border cooperation, formalise investigation procedures, and address legal and operational obstacles in combating human trafficking. The project, which is funded by Sweden, inter alia aims to strengthen the expertise and investigation capacity of law enforcement agencies in the region and Ukraine.[42]

5.6 Funding or implementation of specific measures nationally aimed at addressing trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals towards Sweden

In 2022, the Gender Equality Agency launched the awareness raising campaign **Before You Go**.[43] The campaign targeted both some designated EU-nationals and **third-country nationals (Ukrainians)**, informing about risks of labour exploitation, the Swedish labour market, rights, where to find more information, and where to seek help. The campaign was launched on 15 November 2022 at an event with the ambassadors from the targeted countries. It was spread in social media, media in these countries, and via influential organisations and persons in the targeted countries. The background to the campaign stemmed from results from several reports that were produced through the **CAPE I project**, a Gender Equality Agency and CBSS jointly funded project. The reports found that vulnerable labour migrants lacked information gathered in one place about the risk of trafficking, but also basic information about working in Sweden, accessible in their languages. Total funding of the campaign was SEK 1,100,000 + staff costs (2022).

Within weeks after Russia's invasion of **Ukraine**, the Gender Equality Agency responded by providing professionals and migrants (beneficiaries of temporary protection) with **information on the risks of trafficking in human beings**. The information was shared broadly during the spring and summer of 2022. The Gender Equality Agency also produced information specifically aimed at children. The material was successfully shared via social media and in printed form, for example by the Migration Agency's offices. All information produced was gathered on the Gender Equality Agency's website, which was specifically aimed

[42] Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS): CBSS Begins Development of Investigation Protocol to Combat Human Trafficking – CBSS, last accessed 26 September 2024.
[43] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Before you go | Swedish Gender Equality Agency, last accessed 28 September 2024.

at Ukrainians and launched only a few weeks after the invasion.[44] The page became the most visited page of the Gender Equality Agency's website. Statistics also confirmed that people, while still in Ukraine or in transit to Sweden from Ukraine, visited the page.

In 2023, CBSS revised its **transnational referral mechanism**. As a member of the CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings ((TF-THB), the Gender Equality Agency participated in the update and revision.[45]

5.7 Structured cooperation with third countries of origin and transit, and international organisations for preventing trafficking in human beings towards Sweden

Since 2021, Sweden has concluded additional **bilateral agreements with third countries** on law enforcement cooperation to combat serious crimes, including trafficking in human beings. Such agreements have been concluded with Brazil, Colombia, and Tunisia.

There is an ongoing **bilateral cooperation** between Thai and Swedish authorities regarding human trafficking for the purpose of work exploitation. The objective is to reduce the number of exploited Thai seasonal workers during the berry-picking season in Sweden, and to improve the conditions in the berry picking industry. Cooperation involves several Swedish stakeholders, including the Migration Agency and the Police Authority. Specifically, the Police Authority reports that an investigation is still ongoing of a case involving a large number of possible Thai victims in the northern region of Sweden during the berry-picking season in 2022.[46] Another investigation was initiated in 2023, which is also still ongoing. An investigatory field trip to Thailand will take place in 2024.

Within the framework of the **Nordic Council of Ministers**, Sweden is participating in the **Nordic working group against trafficking in human beings**, established in 2022. The main aim of the working group is to evaluate, develop, support and strengthen Nordic cooperation against trafficking in human beings, including third-country nationals.

Furthermore, in February 2023, the Swedish government offered a **training on trafficking in human beings for diplomats and consular staff** posted in Sweden. Ambassadors and other representatives from some 80 foreign diplomatic missions in Sweden took part. Representatives of Swedish government agencies such as the Police Authority, the Migration Agency, and the Gender Equality Agency also attended the seminar. In the event, arranged by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and hosted by the Swedish Minister of Justice, Sweden also re-launched the CBSS **Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on How to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking** together with Child10 and IOM. The handbook has been developed with the support of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs as a tool to counteract trafficking. Throughout the year, CBSS reported new requests from foreign

[44] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: To you fleeing Ukraine | Swedish Gender Equality Agency, last accessed 28 September 2024.
[45] Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS): Home - Harmonised Operational Framework (bsr-trm.com), last accessed 28 September 2024.
[46] A joint investigation team (JIT) regarding a berry picking case was launched in 2022. Sweden, Finland, and the Department of Criminal Investigations (DCI) in Thailand cooperate in this case.

governments to train its diplomatic staff on the content of the handbook. An additional event linked to the handbook was held for diplomats by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Swedish representation to the UN in Geneva, CBSS, IOM and in cooperation with the Ukrainian representation in Geneva later during the year. It can also be noted that contacts following the first event led to concrete bilateral exchanges and cooperation to prevent and combat cases of human trafficking and exploitation.[47] The Migration Agency participated in developing the handbook and it was disseminated to Swedish diplomatic missions abroad. The handbook is expected to increase the ability of diplomatic missions to identify victims of human trafficking within the specified case types.

Support to the **Swedish embassies** on issues related to trafficking in human beings was one of the tasks of the Ambassador at Large for Combating Trafficking in Persons, in the period studied. Events against trafficking have been arranged by the embassies in **South Africa**, **Nigeria**, and in other important countries of origin in close cooperation with relevant international and national stakeholders.

To complement these efforts across national borders, within the Nordic Council of Ministers, a decision was taken to establish a **Nordic-Baltic network regarding work-related crime**, which can improve and support cooperation and joint action, facilitate access to information and services, and increase capacity and knowledge.

Since the Russian invasion of **Ukraine**, Sweden has pushed the importance of including **measures against human trafficking in the international response**. Targeted support has been given to IOM for efforts against human trafficking in Ukraine and neighbouring countries (SEK 10 million in 2022 and SEK 30 million in 2023). Sweden has prioritised activities that focus on measures to counteract the demand to ensure that women, girls and boys fleeing the war in Ukraine are not exposed to exploitation and various forms of human trafficking.

In 2022, the Gender Equality Agency has focused efforts on strengthening coordination and carrying out extensive information efforts due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Through its established coordination structures, the National Coordination against Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings (NSPM) was able to act quickly with the purpose of preventing exploitation of Ukrainians (displaced persons, beneficiaries of temporary protection). During 2022, enhanced coordination forums were held for authorities, regional coordinators, and civil society organisations. Coordination efforts have facilitated information and knowledge exchange, resulting in analysis reports on the situation regarding risks of human trafficking and prostitution. The reports received widespread media coverage. Linked to this response, the Gender Equality Agency furthermore produced information materials for professionals, as well as for Ukrainian children and adults. The information has been disseminated widely in print and via a webpage aimed at Ukrainians. During 2023, the coordination meetings continued, and the information continued to be disseminated to Ukrainians.

[47] Council of the Baltic Sea States: Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on How to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking – CBSS, last accessed 28 September 2024.

Furthermore, the Swedish government has taken steps to highlight the need to ensure effective coordination of UN agencies to prevent trafficking of human beings in cross-border areas of Ukraine in various events. For instance, the former Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, Johan Forssell, invited key UN actors in a joint dialogue in New York on 26 April 2023 to share information and discuss experience on preventive actions related to gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and trafficking in human beings.

Finally, Sweden is also co-financing UNODC regarding their work against human trafficking which target third countries / regions and third-country nationalities. For 2024, the operational support through the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs amounts to SEK 60 million, specified with a number of priorities. These include: Combating human trafficking: SEK 9,5 million and UNTVF: SEK 2,5 million.

Sweden is taking part in several of the Operational Action Plans under the umbrella of EMPACT. One of those is **Eastern Partnership related trafficking in human beings**, with a focus on **Ukraine**.

One of the tasks are to identify and fight organised crime groups (OCGs) involved in trafficking in human beings, with the purpose of sexual, labour or any other forms of exploitation, in and across the EU, where the suspects and / or victims are from Eastern Partnership countries (more specifically **Ukraine and Moldova**, and where relevant, **Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia**). A specific focus will be on the exploitation of temporarily displaced persons from Ukraine.

6. Sweden's policies and measures related to preventing and reducing the demand that fosters trafficking in human beings

6.1 Challenges in relation to policies and measures aimed at preventing trafficking in human beings towards Sweden in third countries of origin and transit of victims, and measures aimed at preventing and reducing the demand for trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals within Sweden

With regard to **the Covid-19 pandemic**, an increased vulnerability due to the pandemic was reported. (Migrant) women who would not have found themselves in exploitation prior to the pandemic, were increasingly exposed due to socioeconomic factors affecting them during the pandemic. Some of these women came to Sweden, since it was one of the few countries that did not impose a full lock down. Others were already in the country and had not yet

been vaccinated and could not easily leave Sweden as soon as travel restrictions were in place.[48]

The Gender Equality Agency reports that **migrant workers** who come to Sweden often are not aware of their rights on the Swedish labour market.[49] Experience shows that information to migrant workers about their rights as workers in Sweden has a preventive effect on exploitation. While there has been an increase in the number of people being identified in **labour exploitation**, there is often a lack of knowledge about people exploited for this purpose.[50] Similarly, professionals do not always have knowledge about their obligation to provide support for this group.[51] Additionally, more authorities need to be tasked with identifying workers in labour exploitation. Currently, only the Police Authority and regional coordinators against prostitution and trafficking in human beings (located at municipal social services) are tasked with the responsibility to detect and identify labour exploitation.[52]

In 2022, the Gender Equality Agency published **a literature review** of research on methods and approaches to prevent trafficking for sexual exploitation.[53] The review found that few awareness raising campaigns in the field are knowledge based, evaluated or built on known risk factors, which is needed in order for prevention efforts to have an effect. The literature review also found that there were few interventions addressing a **bystander approach**. A bystander approach aims to change social norms by reinforcing the positive forces surrounding someone who is considering exploiting another person and call upon them to speak up against such action. Targeting bystanders has proved to be effective in violence prevention programmes. Stemming from the findings in the literature review, the Gender Equality Agency has worked continuously throughout the reporting period on developing a knowledge base on prevention including launching preventive and knowledge-based campaigns (see 6.4).

Since victims of human trafficking rarely get in contact with authorities by their own initiative to seek support and protection,[54] outreach activity is a vital measure in identifying victims and providing support and protection. Several specialised teams at the Police Authority that targeted cases in relation to trafficking in human beings have been dismantled due to a re-organisation and re-prioritisation in the operative work towards combatting organised crime.

[48] Information on the Police Authority's measures primarily builds on its contribution to the Fifth Progress Report on the Progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2021-2023). The report contributes to the monitoring of the implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, of the EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025) and the Common Anti-Trafficking Plan.
[49] Government Offices of Sweden: Arbetslivskriminalitet – myndighetssamverkan, en gemensam tispfunktion, lärdomar från Belgien och gränsöverskridande arbete (regeringen.se), p. 160, last accessed 26 September 2024.
[50] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Ett fortsatt stärkt arbete mot prostitution och människohandel 2023, 2024:3 p. 22-23, last accessed 24 September 2024.
[51] Ibid., p. 47.
[52] Ibid., p. 45f.
[53] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Att förebygga sexuell exploatering (jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se), last accessed 24 September 2024.
[54] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Prostitution och människohandel 2021:23 (jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se), last accessed 28 September 2024.

Currently there are two specialised groups working towards trafficking in human beings at the Police Authority.[55]

6.2 Good practices in relation to policies and measures aimed at preventing trafficking in human beings towards Sweden in third countries of origin and transit of victims, and measures aimed at preventing and reducing the demand for trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals within Sweden

The Police Authority reports that **intelligence sharing** in the network regarding work related crime established under the Nordic Council of Ministers (explained in 5.7) has led to concrete results (prosecutions) where victims of trafficking in human beings were identified.

Furthermore, national experts have highlighted Sweden's role in developing and supporting the relaunch of the CBSS **Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on How to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking** in 2023. Throughout the year, CBSS reported new requests from foreign governments to train its diplomatic staff on the content of the handbook. An additional event linked to the handbook was held for diplomats by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish representation to the UN in Geneva, CBSS, IOM and in cooperation with the Ukrainian representation in Geneva. Experts say that contacts following the first event led to concrete bilateral exchanges and cooperation to prevent and combat cases of human trafficking and exploitation. The handbook is expected to increase the ability of diplomatic missions to identify victims of human trafficking within the specified case types, and has proved to be in demand as an important tool internationally.

The campaign **Before you go** (explained in 5.6) targeted workers before entering Sweden. However, since 2023, advertising the campaign abroad on social media is no longer possible.

The Gender Equality Agency launched the preventative information campaign **Don't let the silence speak** in 2023 with the aim to discourage the demand in buying sexual services.[56] The campaign targets knowledge-based risk factors identified in former literature reviews and campaign evaluations. People exploiting others for sexual purposes care more about the social consequences than other consequences such as the exploitation per se or the fact that it is illegal to purchase sexual services. In order to address the culture and social norms regarding prostitution the campaign uses a bystander approach. Targeting bystanders has proved to be effective in violence prevention programmes. The aim of the campaign is to reinforce the positive forces surrounding someone who is considering buying sex and call upon them to speak up against such action. There is also a need for awareness raising campaigns to be connected to support material and user guidance for professionals. The Don't let the silence speak campaign included both video clips targeting boys and men, which were spread on social media, as well as a

[55] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Ett fortsatt stärkt arbete mot prostitution och människohandek 2023, 2024:3, p. 44, last accessed 28 September 2024.
[56] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Låt inte tystnaden tala - våga säg ifrån! | NSPM (jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se), last accessed 28 September 2024.

method support associated to the campaign, informing professionals on how to use the material.[57]

In 2021, an evaluation of the **KAST clinics** (counselling clinics for buyers of sexual services) was initiated. The Gender Equality Agency coordinates and is partly funding the evaluation. The KAST clinics welcome individuals seeking to change behaviours related to exploiting others and is a unique prevention measure internationally. The evaluation aims to increase equal methods and standardise the work at the clinics to be provided equally across the country. The evaluation is ongoing and is expected to be completed in 2025.[58] Experts say the normative effect on reduction of the demand is assumed to also influence the demand for sexual services abroad, as Swedish sex buyers also buy sex in third countries such as **Thailand**.

Furthermore, the Gender Equality Agency reports that the Swedish Sex Purchase Act[59] has had effects on preventing and reducing demand for trafficking in human beings, according to the evaluation conducted in 2010 by the Swedish government.[60] Arguably, some of the impacts have an international dimension:

- The law has deterred trafficking, as criminals have not sought to establish organised trafficking networks so readily in Sweden
- The number of foreign women in prostitution has increased but not to the extent noticed in neighbouring countries
- Exit strategies and alternatives have been developed
- Adoption of the law has been a pioneering model for other countries

In 2022, the Gender Equality Agency produced a **comprehensive brochure targeting people in exploitation or in risk of exploitation in trafficking in human beings** and prostitution.[61] The brochure informs about rights in Sweden, what trafficking in human beings and prostitution involve as well as contact information to actors on where to get support and protection. In 2023, the brochure was translated into two more languages, and it is now available in **12 languages**, including Arabic, Dari, Persian, Russian, Thai, Ukrainian and Vietnamese, in addition to some EU Member State languages.[62]

Two coordination initiatives during the reporting period have exemplified the importance of well-functioning coordination collaborations between authorities, municipalities and civil society. Established structures of collaboration enable swift responses and efforts, preventing and reducing demand.

[57] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Ett fortsatt stärkt arbete mot prostitution och människohandel 2023, 2024:3, p. 10-12, last accessed 26 September 2024.
[58] Ibid., p. 13.
[59] The Act (1998:408) prohibiting the purchase of sexual services
[60] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Prostitution policy in Sweden – targeting demand (jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se) , p.8, last accessed 26 September 2024.
[61] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Broschyr till personer utsatta för prostitution eller människohandel | NSPM (jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se), last accessed 28 September 2024.
[62] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Ett fortsatt stärkt arbete mot prostitution och människohandel 2023, 2024:3, p.5, 7, last accessed 24 September 2024.

During 2022 and 2023, the Gender Equality Agency convened central authorities, regional coordinators and civil society to coordination meetings to share the status on the risk of exploitation of **Ukrainians** fleeing the war, with the aim to detect and prevent exploitation among the Ukrainian population (displaced, beneficiaries of temporary protection) in Sweden. By convening key stakeholders in the anti-trafficking field in Sweden, their respective assessments on the status and findings were shared, discussed and compared among the three categories of actors in order to develop each ability to better respond to the increase of risk of exploitation among Ukrainians. Three coordination meetings were held in 2023.[63]

Throughout the reporting period, a number of cases related to exploitation in the berry picking industry have been reported. In 2023, a large case concerning 42 migrant workers from Thailand in the northern regions of Sweden was brought to the authorities' attention. In the autumn of 2023, the Gender Equality Agency began planning for an upcoming task force (convened in March 2024) with the aim to map the challenges authorities face, and to develop methods on preventing exploitation of foreign berry pickers.[64]

6.3 Main outcomes resulting from the implementation of policies and measures aimed at preventing, raising awareness and reducing the demand of trafficking in human beings of third-country nationals

Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Increase in identified persons in labour exploitation

The Gender Equality Agency gathers statistics on presumed victims of trafficking and human exploitation from regional coordinators and launches the findings in an annual report. In the 2024 report (data from 2023), the number of presumed victims of labour exploitation for the first time exceeded the numbers of presumed victims of sexual exploitation. The increase in numbers of presumed victims of labour exploitation can partly be explained by deepened work against work-related crime in relation to competence development towards other authorities.[65]

The campaign "Before you go" has led to an increase in interactions on social media

The campaign (explained in 5.6) was relaunched in social media in 2023, after its first launch in 2022. The campaign was disseminated on Facebook and Instagram from July to December, targeting persons over the age of 18 years, living in Sweden and with language settings in **Ukrainian**, in addition to some EU Member State languages. In total the campaign reached 113 000 unique users and generated almost 218 000 interactions mainly via shares and comments but also through savings of the posts. The campaign had an efficient reach and visibility and resulted in higher exposure than expected among the target group.[66]

Re-launch of the awareness raising campaign "Travel courage"

[63] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Ett fortsatt stärkt arbete mot prostitution och människohandel 2023, 2024:3, p.15, last accessed 28 September 2024.
[64] Ibid., p. 5, 38.
[65] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Ett fortsatt stärkt arbete mot prostitution och människohandel 2023, 2024:3, p.23.
[66] Ibid., p. 15.

The campaign is run by the Gender Equality Agency together with the Police Authority, the country administrative boards, and the non-governmental organisations Ecpat and World Childhood Foundation. It was first launched in 2014 with the aim to **prevent sexual exploitation of children abroad** by encouraging Swedish travellers to report suspected cases of sexual exploitation of children to the police. The campaign was updated in 2022 with a new video clip and new knowledge on grooming, risk situations and sexual exploitation abroad. The campaign has been spread via social media posts and ads **targeted at Swedes travelling to Asia**, all Police Authority passport offices, displays at Stockholm's Arlanda airport and digital ads in the largest new websites aimed at Swedes in Asia. Statistics from 2023 found the campaign had reached 1,1 million accounts. Due to changes in Facebook's marketing terms, the campaign only targeted persons located in Sweden in 2023.[67]

The campaign "Don't let the silence speak": millions of views in several media channels

The campaign (explained in 6.2) targeted boys and men in several social media, a tv channel and in cinemas. In total the video clips aimed at youth in social media reached 6,6 million views and ads aimed at adults reached nearly 1 million views.[68] The videos were advertised on YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram.[69] The campaign strategy in **social media** was deemed to be cost efficient and the advertising generated a high frequency in views. The campaign videos were advertised to 120 000 visitors to Filmstaden's cinemas. TV4's streaming services reached 200 000 unique views among men aged 25-79.[70] From the launch on 18 October 2023 until the end of the year, 2 700 people had visited the campaign page for young people and 900 had visited the page for adults. The initiative has also been noticed in several news media and in a number of profiles with over 200 000 followers on social media have voluntarily shared the campaign in their channels. The videos have also been distributed and presented by other authorities at conferences in 2023.

7. Sweden's policies and measures related to the identification, protection, support and empowerment of victims of trafficking, and law enforcement

[67] Ibid., p. 14.
[68] Not confirmed whether numbers represent unique views, since advertising took place in several channels. The numbers are merged and represent the number of unique views in respective channel.
[69] Through Instagram and Facebook, 91 000 unique views among young people and 208 100 adults were reached. In total, the films were viewed 561 200 times. In order to reach out to young people, the advertising was deemed necessary to take place partly via new channels where the target group is mainly located. With the help of a media agency, the Gender Equality Agency also reached out via TikTok and SnapChat. On TikTok, the videos were viewed 113 300 times for 23 800 unique individuals. To increase exposure, the campaign was moved to Snapchat. The campaign period was also extended. On Snapchat, the advertisement was viewed 4,5 million times and reached 345 300 unique profiles. The videos were also advertised via YouTube for a month and reached 338 000 young people and 355 000 adults.
[70] The advertising on TV4 reached almost 200 000 unique views among men aged 25-79.

and judicial response with a view to breaking the criminal model of traffickers

7.1 Challenges in relation to the implementation of specific policies and measures aimed at enhancing the identification, protection, support and empowerment of victims trafficked towards Sweden in third countries of origin and transit, and of third-country national victims of trafficking identified within Sweden

With regard to **the Covid-19 pandemic**, an increased vulnerability due to the pandemic was reported. (Migrant) women who would not have found themselves in exploitation prior to the pandemic, were increasingly exposed due to socioeconomic factors affecting them during the pandemic. Some of these women came to Sweden, since it was one of the few countries that did not impose a full lock down. Others were already in the country and had not yet been vaccinated and could not easily leave Sweden as soon as travel restrictions were in place.[71]

The Gender Equality Agency reports there are still information **gaps among professionals meeting victims** of human trafficking related to the application of the reflection period. The implementation of the legislative change from 2022 mandating municipal Social Welfare Committees to apply for a reflection period for victims of human trafficking has been uneven across different municipalities. The number of applications for reflection period remains low, partly due to uncertainties in how the task should be performed as well as how other relevant legislation should be understood. Children are not eligible for a reflection period when accompanied by a guardian eligible for a reflection period. Another challenge is that few children are referred to Barnahus[72] when a child is presumed to be a victim of human trafficking.[73]

The two support programmes funded by the Gender Equality Agency, the IOM **Assisted Voluntary Support Programme**[74] and the **National support programme**[75] were initially designed to support individuals subject to sexual

[71] Ibid.
[72] In the Swedish context, Barnahus admit children subjected to violence and sexual abuse and offers children to be interviewed and receive support by various authorities all in the same place. By having different authorities to collaborate in the Barnahus model, it secures a child centred approach in investigations and offers safety and accommodate the child's needs. There are currently 33 Barnahus in Sweden. More information available at: Nätverk för barnahus - Linköpings universitet (liu.se), last accessed 7 October 2024.
[73] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Ett fortsatt stärkt arbete mot prostitution och människohandel 2023, 2024:3, p.41, last accessed 28 September 2024.
[74] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Återvändandeprogrammet | NSPM (jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se), last accessed 28 September 2024.
[75] Swedish Platform Civil society against Human Trafficking: Nationella stödprogrammet - Plattformen Civila Sverige mot Människohandel, last accessed 18 June 2024.

exploitation. In recent years, there has been an increase in people being identified in particular sectors (for example in the berry picking industry), and for other exploitation purposes than sexual exploitation. This reality not only impacts the regional coordinators' workload in informing about the support which the programmes provide and filling in applications for the support programmes, but it also requires more time and effort for the IOM programme. Additionally, it puts more financial pressure on the IOM programme in handling large group cases since it is difficult to anticipate budget means in advance. Tailored support to individuals in labour exploitation is also needed, such as legal support in reclaiming salaries, since this may differ from the support an individual in sexual exploitation needs.[76]

7.2 Challenges in relation to policies and measures aimed at enhancing the law enforcement and judicial response to trafficking in human beings towards Sweden in third countries of origin and transit of victims, and within Sweden

There have been few prosecutions and verdicts delivered regarding trafficking in human beings and labour exploitation in Sweden over recent years. For example, there were no verdicts regarding trafficking in human beings in 2022. More competence development is needed to ensure professionals in the judicial system have adequate knowledge on trafficking in human beings, the Gender Equality Agency reports.[77]

The Police Authority has reported that the fact that more and more of the sexual exploitation has moved online is a challenge because it demands a different approach from law enforcement. Criminal networks operating online and from other countries through call-centres and business model trafficking run the online exploitation, which challenges the capacity of detecting and investigating them through traditional methods. Resources applied need therefore to be adjusted and designated to digital detection of the crime in cooperation with law enforcement agencies in other countries and the EU.[78]

7.3 Good practices in relation to the implementation of specific policies and measures aimed at enhancing identification, protection, support, and empowerment of victims trafficked towards Sweden in third countries of origin and transit, and of third-country national victims identified in Sweden

National experts have highlighted the campaign **Before you go** (explained in 5.6), as a possible good practice. It targeted workers before their entry to Sweden. The campaign was re-launched in social media in 2023, after its first

[76] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Ett fortsatt stärkt arbete mot prostitution och människohandel 2023, 2024:3, p.51, last accessed 28 September 2024.
[77] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Ett fortsatt stärkt arbete mot prostitution och människohandel 2023, 2024:3, p.39, 59, last accessed 28 September 2024.
[78] Information on the Police Authority's measures primarily builds on its contribution to the Fifth Progress Report on the Progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2021-2023). The report contributes to the monitoring of the implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, of the EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025) and the Common Anti-Trafficking Plan.

launch in 2022. The campaign was disseminated on Facebook and Instagram from July to December 2023, targeting persons over the age of 18 years, living in Sweden and with language settings in **Ukrainian**, in addition to some EU Member State languages. In total the campaign reached 113 000 unique users and generated almost 218 000 interactions mainly via shares and comments but also through savings of the posts. The campaign had an efficient reach and visibility and resulted in higher exposure than expected among the target group.

The **regional coordinators against prostitution and human trafficking** are a unique and central function in the field of anti-trafficking in Sweden, the Gender Equality Agency reports. The regional coordinators are employed by the municipal government social services and coordinated by the Gender Equality Agency. They play a crucial role in the processes of identification, support and protection. The regional coordinators provide advice and guidance to other professionals (such as social workers, the Police Authority, including border control) as a focal point when professionals are in contact with presumed / victims of human trafficking, safeguarding the principles of the National Referral Mechanism.

The regional coordinators' referral of victims into the support and protection system not only enables victims exiting exploitation, but also prevents re-exploitation. The regional coordinators also take part in various awareness raising activities and trainings. There are currently 16 regional coordinators spread across the seven police regions in Sweden.

7.4 Main outcomes resulting from the implementation of policies and measures aimed at improving the identification, protection, support and empowerment of third-country national victims of trafficking

The **regional coordinators against prostitution and human trafficking** take part in the Police Authority's **outreach activities and joint inspections of workplaces**.[79] The presence of the coordinators during these activities increases the chances of identification of victims and their right to support and protection due to their specialised competence in, for example, detecting signs of trafficking and skills in trauma focused dialogue. One example is the impact of the regional coordinators targeted work towards children. In a report from the Gender Equality Agency in 2021, one conclusion was that in these regions, more children were identified and offered support and protection.[80] A GRETA report further concludes that "the presence of regional co-ordinators during police outreach activities and joint inspections of places of work greatly facilitates the identification of victims of trafficking and their access to assistance." [81] In 2022 and 2023, regional coordinators identified and offered support and protection to

[79] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Regionkoordinatorer | NSPM (jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se), last accessed 28 September 2024.
[80] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Prostitution och människohandel (2021:23),p.40., last accessed 28 September 2024.
[81] GRETA Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings: Evaluation report Sweden - third evaluation round, 19 October 2023, last accessed 28 September 2024.

a progressively higher number of third-country nationals, primarily from **Ukraine, Thailand and Nigeria**.[82]

8. Sweden's cooperation with third countries and with international organisations

8.1 Good practices in the cooperation with third countries of origin and transit of victims, and with international organisations, to prevent the trafficking of third-country nationals towards the EU

In connection with the berry picking season, Swedish and Thai stakeholders have **collaborated to minimise** the risk of human trafficking and exploitation of Thai berry pickers in Sweden, the Migration Agency reports. The success factors have consisted of a general transparency between authorities (for example information about the procedures at the Migration Agency, rules regarding the Swedish labour market etc.)

In November 2023 the Gender Equality Agency invited the OSCE to cooperate in a **workshop** with the aim to enhance anti-trafficking prevention amid mass migration flows in relation to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. OSCE conducted country visits to share recommendations among the OSCE Member States on responses and measures to prevent trafficking and enhance integration and support to those fleeing Ukraine. The Gender Equality Agency involved the National Methods Team (an expert group coordinated by the Gender Equality Agency including several Swedish authorities and the regional coordinators) to share examples from Sweden on ongoing and completed measures to prevent exploitation among Ukrainians in Sweden. OSCE also provided the Gender Equality Agency and the participants in the workshop with valuable knowledge about measures and operations in other OSCE Member States.

[82] Swedish Gender Equality Agency: Regionkoordinatorernas statistik om människoandel och människoexploatering 2022 and Regionkoordinatorernas statistik om människohandel och människoexploatering 2023, last accessed 7 October 2024.

9.Sweden's needs and future national measures and policies

9.1 Particular needs in addressing the international dimension of trafficking in human beings

The government appointed a number of inquiries that were tasked to present proposals that touch upon the identification of potential victims of human trafficking.

For example, one inquiry examined the possibility to incorporate an **exit programme** for adults subjected to prostitution and victims of human trafficking for sexual purposes and a programme for children subjected to sexual exploitation and human trafficking for sexual purposes. Its final report was published in December 2023.[83] The report recognised that migrants make up a large number of those that are exploited for prostitution and that third-country nationals are a particularly vulnerable group.[84] The inquiry proposed, inter alia:

- Individually designed exit programmes for adults and individually designed programmes for children
- An individual plan for the exit process and a multidisciplinary team
- Coordinator and support person accompanying them throughout the entire process
- Temporary residence permit linked to the individual plan for the exit process

Furthermore, another government inquiry on **protection, support and care for victims of abuses in the production or distribution of pornography** presented its report in December 2023.[85] The legal provisions for human trafficking for sexual purposes can cover sexual exploitation in the form of abuse in pornographic contexts, and in its report the inquiry included proposals for how identification of such cases can be strengthened. The report highlighted that migrants in an irregular situation and unaccompanied minors are particularly vulnerable groups, and that they risk multiple exploitation.[86]

Both reports are currently under consideration in the Government Offices.

[83] Government Offices of Sweden: Ut ur utsatthet – betänkande av Utredningen om exitprogram för personer som är utsatta för prostitution, SOU 2023:97, available at: Ut ur utsatthet - Regeringen.se, last accessed 8 October 2024.
[84] Ibid., p. 163, 307.
[85] Government Offices of Sweden: Sexuellt utnyttjande i pornografiska syften – våldsutsatthet som behöver synliggöras – betänkande av Utredningen om skydd, stöd och vård för personer som har utsatts för övergrepp vid produktion eller distribution av pornografi, SOU 2023:98, 15 December 2023, available at: Sexuellt utnyttjande i pornografiska syften - Regeringen.se, last accessed 8 October 2024.
[86] Ibid., p. 459, 502.

9.2 Plans to develop new policies or measures that address the international dimension of trafficking in human beings

The government intends to develop a **new national action** plan against human trafficking for the years 2025–2027. The purpose is to prevent and combat exploitation in prostitution and human trafficking for all purposes, as well as to strengthen the protection of vulnerable individuals.[87]

The position as **Special Envoy against human trafficking and exploitation** will be re-established within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

[87] Government Offices of Sweden: Fri och trygg - Åtgärdsprogram för att förebygga och bekämpa mäns våld mot kvinnor, våld i nära relationer och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck samt prostitution och människohandel 2024–2026 (regeringen.se), p. 60, 20 June 2024, last accessed 8 October 2024.

Migrationsverket

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About the EMN

The European Migration Network (EMN) is an EU funded network, set up with the aim of providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum for institutions of the European Union, plus authorities and institutions of the Member States of the EU, in order to inform policymaking. The EMN also serves to provide the wider public with such information. The EMN was established by Council Decision 2008/381/EC adopted on 14 May 2008. The Swedish Migration Agency is the Swedish National Contact Point (NCP) for the EMN.

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