



Knowledge Sheet

The role of inter-institutional coordination, NGOs and Ombudspersons in countering Trafficking in Human Beings

The case of Greece



Background

Greece is a transit and destination country for victims, mainly trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour and forced begging. Female sex trafficking victims are primarily from Eastern Europe, including Azerbaijan. Greece has been either a destination or a transit country for a significant number of refugees and migrants. That poses additional challenges in Trafficking in Human Beings (THB), which flourishes in irregular migration routes and targets the most vulnerable individuals.

The complexity of the trafficking phenomenon calls for a comprehensive response. A single trafficking case may sometimes involve many government bodies, such as the Police and law enforcement, State Migration Service, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ombudspersons and non-governmental organizations. Coordination bodies such as National Referral Mechanisms on THB in Greece and Azerbaijan play as a bridge between various entities and ensure the timely and proper response of the authorities and all protection actors to the needs of the victims of human trafficking, according to the international standards in this field.

Among other actors, Ombudspersons play a significant role in defending the rights of victims of trafficking in human beings (THB). For example, they can investigate complaints, launch own initiative investigations, issue recommendations, publicise findings and opinions on THB.

Great importance is given to the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are involved in awareness raising, research, training, detecting victims of trafficking, providing victims with accommodation and other assistance, and supporting them through the criminal justice process and in order to claim compensation.





Promising practices

Fundraising by the state agencies, in order to expand existing raising awareness and training activities and to upgrade social services that are provided to victims of human trafficking.

Seminars launched by the Greek's National Referral Mechanism (EKKA), promoting a harmonized interpretation of the human trafficking crime (usually confused with smuggling or gender-related violence). Seminars are of Interagency character and are aimed to enhance the cooperation between state and non-state actors.

The Ombudsman Office in Greece managed to remove actual but not officially recognised victims of trafficking from the Schengen list and national record of undesirable foreigners.

The Establishment of the Legal practitioners' working group, where the lawyers (mostly of NGOs) share information and concerns on the legal cases they manage.

Formal working group under the Ministry of Justice, in which the judiciary sector participate, aiming to identify gaps in the legal framework and its implementation and share recommendations with the competent authorities.

The Ombudsman's Office in Greece with support of NGOs made policy and legislative proposals to increase awareness and proactive protection of the rights of vulnerable groups including victims of trafficking.



Further readings

[Protection of vulnerable children](#)

[National mechanism for the prevention of torture](#)

[Forced returns control mechanism](#)

[National mechanism for arbitrary incidents](#)

[Proposal for effective protection](#)

[EKKA Greece resources](#)

Annual reports

- [2019](#)
- [2020](#)
- [2021](#)

[Handbook for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking](#)



Lessons Learnt

The state anti-trafficking response may be enhanced by taking advantage of funding tools from various sources, including projects with other states' actors, to exchange good practices and reflect the cross-border dimension of the phenomenon.

It is important to enhance the NGO coalition's coordination with the existing state services for the THB victims, in order to facilitate the victim's navigation through the protection system.

Anti-trafficking actors should design a process of regular flow of statistical data to a central state authority, coming from any actor (state and non-state) that detects a presumed THB victim.

Particular action is required to tackle trafficking and exploitation of laborers from third countries as well as to effectively protect victims of trafficking that remain unrecognized for various reasons.

Effective procedures specific to victims of trafficking must be put in place to guarantee effective protection. Cross border communication and cooperation of peer institutions (eg Ombudsmen, police, social welfare etc) is key to effective protection.

Further capacity building measures (training, sharing best practices, networking and coordination of agencies and organizations) are needed to improve the ability of competent agencies to identify victims of trafficking.



Actors

Greece

National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Trafficking Victims

Greece

Ombudsperson's Office

Funded by the European Union



Implemented by ICMPD



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