**Austrian Contribution**

**OHCHR, Call for input for the report on trafficking in persons and gender, peace and security by Special Rapporteur Siobhán Mullally**

* **National action plans on women, peace and security which include comprehensive measures to prevent and respond to trafficking in persons for all purposes of exploitation**

The Austrian National Action Plan on WPS references the National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking, whose content overlaps regarding the situation of girls and women in (post-) conflict regions.

According to the NAP, Austrian personnel participating in peace operations and humanitarian missions take responsibility for respecting and actively implementing the objectives of participation of women and protection of women and girls in the area of operation. It foresees that education, training and awareness-raising activities convey i.a. the implications of the spread of prostitution in conflict areas (trafficking in women, organised crime, sexual abuse, protection of minors).

* **Disarmament demobilization and reintegration programmes which incorporate gender perspectives**

The Austrian Ministry of Defence deals with the topic DDR in the broader context of Security Sector Reform (SSR), whereby the focus is on the effectiveness and accountability of the security sector. Human security, in particular the WPS-agenda, is treated as a cross-cutting topic throughout. ESDC (European Security & Defence College)-certified training courses in this area take place twice a year as part of the MoD – Austrian Centre for Peace (ACP) cooperation. Furthermore, the MoD heads a sub-working group within the ESDC on the topic of SSR&DDR, the so-called Executive Academic Board on SSR&DDR (EAB on SSR) - here, too, the aspect of human security is included as a cross-cutting topic.

* **Prevention and accountability measures in relation to ~~non-state armed groups and~~ trafficking in persons, for all purposes of exploitation**

Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings is an important part of the current Austrian Governmental Work Programme 2020-2024. It states that combatting trafficking in human beings is a task, being addressed comprehensively with all available funds and energy. Austria is a signatory to all relevant international legal instruments to combat human trafficking, including the Supplementing Protocol to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crimes (2000) and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005).

The Task Force on Combatting Human Trafficking was set up in 2004 and is chaired by the AT Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All relevant ministries and their working groups on child trafficking, sexual exploitation and labour exploitation, as well as victim protection organizations such as LEFÖ-IBF (women), MEN VIA (men) and Drehscheibe (children) are represented. The Task Force is in charge of elaborating National Action Plans on Combating Human Trafficking and of monitoring their implementation. Currently, the seventh National Action Plan (2024-2027) has been elaborated and adopted. The areas of focus of the 103 measures in the currently implemented Seventh National Action Plan (2024-2027) are **coordination, prevention, victim protection, prosecution** and **monitoring**. The basis is a **victim-focused, gender-equitable, child-oriented and human rights-based approach**. There is a particular focus on supporting women (female-specific victim protection facility, LEFÖ-IBF) and protecting children, for example preparations for a national child protection facility are being driven forward by the NAP. The seventh NAP included participation of survivors of human trafficking for the first time.

An important part of the Task Force’s measures on raising awareness is the annual Vienna Conference on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings with an alternating thematic focus on one of the different aspects of THB and with participation of international experts. This year the conference entitled “Trafficking in Human Beings – a private matter?” will take place on 17 October 2024 at the Vienna School of International Studies.

As mentioned above, NGOs such as LEFÖ-IBF take an important part in the Task Force. Various preventive measures (for all purposes of exploitation) with regard to trafficking in women are taken by LEFÖ-IBF, such as nationwide outreach work in the digital space, training courses for police officers and public relations work. Moreover, the Intervention Center for Trafficked Women (IBF) organized an information campaign ("*Be safe on the way*") on social media at the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, targeting refugees from Ukraine and informing them about the risk of human trafficking and offers of support. In addition, flyers and posters were designed and distributed at train stations and counseling centers.

* **Trainings for relevant personnel to identify, document and denounce situations with risks of trafficking, in particular in refugee camps or in IDP sites**

Training sessions are provided and conducted by the Criminal Intelligence Service. These sessions are developed in collaboration with both governmental and non-governmental organizations, focusing on indicators and essential aspects for the early detection of human trafficking. The Criminal Intelligence Service particularly supports the IOM project “*Promotion of the Identification of Trafficking Victims in the Asylum Procedure – 'Asyl Train I and II'*” (now: **KOMPASS**). The trainings emphasize raising awareness about human trafficking and child trafficking, intercultural competencies, migration, and unaccompanied minors who disappear from the asylum process. These in-person and online training sessions are conducted with the involvement of LEFÖ-IBF, MEN VIA, and the Vienna Child and Youth Welfare Service. The Criminal Intelligence Service and the Federal State Criminal Police Offices (LKÄ) conduct also other nationwide training on child trafficking.

The list of indicators for identifying child trafficking victims is continually updated by the Criminal Intelligence Service based on new modes of operation of perpetrators, the behaviour and reactions of victims, and ad hoc events. The list of indicators is included in the Criminalistics’ Guide (Knowledge Platform for (Criminal) Police Information) of the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior and is electronically available to all police officers at any time.

Training on the identification and dealing with victims of Trafficking of Human Beings (TBH) in the asylum procedure is required for staff at the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum. Both internal and external stakeholders (such as IOM) provide this training program. In order to improve the high quality of the procedures and to raise awareness among officials, the topic "***Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking***" has been central in advanced trainings since 2015. Since 2022, the training “***IOM - Human Trafficking: Recognizing Trafficked Persons in Asylum and Alien Law Proceedings***” has been mandatory training for all new employees of the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum.

The focus of these trainings is to familiarize participants with possible types, indicators and manifestations of trafficking in human beings and child trafficking in Austria. This service is supported by an e-learning course created by IOM on “*Recognizing Trafficked Persons in Asylum and Immigration Proceedings*” to ensure that vulnerable groups are recognized and appropriate steps can be taken. The content of these trainings is continuously being evaluated and adapted as required.

* **National procedures for early identification, assistance and referral to protection services for victims or potential victims of trafficking including gender and child sensitive measures in conflict and post-conflict settings, including in context of forced displacement and forced migration**

As mentioned above, the Austrian Task Force on Combating Human Trafficking has thematic sub-working groups. One of them is the **Working Group against Labor Exploitation**, which developed an information brochure for Au Pairs in Austria in 2020/2021. The document is available in eight languages and provides information on the rights and obligations of Au Pairs in Austria.

Another sub-working group is the **Working Group against Child Trafficking**. The Austrian Federal Chancellery coordinates the activities of the Working Group against Child Trafficking. The Working Group against Child Trafficking implements measures set out in the respective National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking. In particular, it deals with issues related to the identification and care of child victims of trafficking, the development of information material, training for competent authorities and institutions, the establishment of nationwide standards and a national referral mechanism for dealing with child victims of trafficking. These measures have already been part of the Austrian National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking 2021 - 2023 and are again included in the seventh National Action Plan 2024 - 2027.

As one of these measures, the working group has developed information materials for trainings for professionals who may encounter victims of child trafficking. The Working Group against Child Trafficking has developed and published several information folders, such as "*Child Trafficking in Austria*" which contains generally applicable indicators and risk profiles to facilitate the often challenging identification of victims, and "*Guidance for identifying and dealing with potential victims of child trafficking*", which is currently being revised and will be republished within a few months. A new brochure "*Child Trafficking in Austria*" was made, including contact information for the responsible contacts and the Federal Criminal Police Office’s Human Trafficking Hotline, which is distributed nationwide at various events.

Workshops and trainings on the identification, treatment, and care of child victims of trafficking are conducted on a regular basis for the police, the asylum and immigration authorities, and the competent childcare institutions of the State and the regions. These trainings are held by the Federal Criminal Police Office as well as specialized institutions: ECPAT, LEFÖ-IBF, MEN-VIA and IOM together with experts in the field of children's rights. For example, the Criminal Intelligence Service and the Vienna Child and Youth Welfare Service exchange information and findings about unaccompanied minors on a regular basis, especially from countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, or Hungary to enable a rapid exchange of criminal police information and findings with international liaison and investigative officers bilaterally whenever necessary.

A relevant project in this regard is the **SAFE RETURN II** project carried out by LEFÖ-IBF for female victims from in 2023-2024. It aims to ensure the safe return and reintegration of trafficking victims through risk assessments conducted by qualified victim protection organizations using a holistic approach. Key elements ensuring the success of the project include:

* Correct classification and analysis of risks in advance by a qualified victim protection organization to, if necessary, draw up security plans and use comprehensive national and international cooperation structures.
* Regular networking and exchanges (with IOM, the Federal Police, the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and the Federal Agency for Care and Support Services) to ensure that victims of human trafficking remain the focus for all key stakeholders throughout the entire project and that victims’ rights are upheld at all levels.
* LEFÖ-IBF’s efforts to meet Austrian quality standards in victim protection, even during voluntary returns.
* LEFÖ-IBF’s promotion of the Austrian model of continuous victim protection as a best practice for other countries while being a member of several transnational anti-trafficking organizations.

Concerning male victim protection services, MEN VIA had offered ongoing assistance to male adult victims of trafficking since 2014. Having a non-governmental victim support organization makes it convenient for other NGOs, trade unions and private supporters to refer victims to help facilities without having to contact the authorities. In such cases and with the consent of the victims, MEN VIA supports those victims in reporting the crime.

* **Relief, recovery and assistance programmes which ensure effective access to reparations for victims of trafficking**

In Austria, the establishment of psychosocial and legal assistance during court proceedings is internationally considered a best practice model to ensure the access to rights for victims of violence. Austrian courts record the estimated amount of damages in their judgements, including those convicting traffickers. In most cases, traffickers keep their money hidden and do not own any assets. Subsequent civil actions are usually successful and result in compensation payments.

* **Mandatory trainings for peacekeeping personnel on trafficking in persons for all purposes of exploitation**

In addition to a general briefing for all Austrian participants in foreign as part of mission preparation, selected personnel receive training as part of the "Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Course for Peace Support Operations (CTHBC/PSO)". In the years 2021-2023, the topic of "human trafficking" was taught in exercises as part of all foreign deployment-oriented courses, as well as various deployment preparations missions (UNIFIL, KFOR, EUFOR, EUTM Mali and numerous other small missions).

* **Design of gender sensitive responses and programmes on prevention, protection and recovery from conflict-related sexual violence, psycho-social and medical support services, which mainstream trafficking in persons**

MEN VIA assists men, who became victims of all forms of exploitation. As a department of a gender sensitive working centre for psychological counselling for boys and men in Vienna, MEN VIA offers multilingual recovery services to victims of trafficking.

* **Investigations and accountability for trafficking in persons ~~and exploitation of natural resources and land dispossession and the nexus between trafficking and militarization which address challenges, protection gaps and good practices~~**

As part of EMPACT (*European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats*) – annual Europe-wide priority actions to combat human trafficking (**JAD GLOBAL OP CHAIN**) are carried out for the purposes of sexual exploitation, begging, committing crimes, and child trafficking (currently running from 03 June to 09 June 2024). The Europe-wide measures to combat human trafficking in Austria are coordinated by the Criminal Intelligence Service Austria in cooperation with EUROPOL - Desk Austria (Lead). The goal of these operational measures is the earliest possible detection and identification of potential adult and minor victims of human trafficking.

Due to the increasingly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine and the resulting risk, that fleeing Ukrainians, especially women, could become victims of human trafficking, Austria established the Task Force THB Ukraine in May 2022. This platform enables a regular exchange on strategies and best practices, prevention, identification of victims, information exchange and procurement, and finally, bi- and multilateral operative measures between 11 countries, Europol, and the European Commission.

To gain an overview of the situation in Austria regarding Ukrainian refugees, the Austrian Criminal Intelligence Service initiated a security police information retrieval by analyzing national and international reports and situation maps on Ukraine, and among others by using use web crawlers to automatically search on internet platforms for relevant profiles. These are only a few of the measures that are effective to tackle trafficking in human beings within the Ukrainian refugee community. Based on this knowledge, the Austrian Criminal Intelligence Service experts take measures to raise awareness among refugees, officials, and civil society of the ever-increasing risks of Ukrainian women and children becoming victims of human trafficking. The Austrian Criminal Intelligence Service offered support to Ukraine’s neighboring states, raised awareness among the police force for the entry of Ukrainian minors with adult strangers, and checked relevant establishments. A very helpful tool is an Austrian-wide broadcast of a warning notice named “*Trafficking in Human Beings Ukraine*”.