

Report on the implementation of the Malta Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Persons
January 2014- December 2014

Submitted in accordance with the Action: “The submission of a progress report to the Prime Minister, once every 6 months”

Report for January-December 2014

During 2014 actions were undertaken with a view to implementing Malta’s second National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Persons.

Such actions addressed measures requiring ongoing attention throughout the term of implementation of the Action Plan, as well as other measures, in particular those that were to be concluded during 2014.

Action was taken as follows with regard to measures to be implemented on an ongoing basis:

- The regular convening of the **Human Trafficking Monitoring Committee** and the **Stakeholder Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings;**

The Human Trafficking Monitoring Committee met 2 times during 2014 while the Stakeholders Task Force on Human Trafficking in Human Beings met 5 times during the reporting period.

- The submission of a progress report to the Prime Minister, once every 6 months;

This requirement is being met by means of the present report.

- Enhancement of the Administrative Capacity of the authorities involved in victim identification, victim support or the apprehension/prosecution of offenders;

2014 statistics reveal a larger number of identified victims compared to previous years. . In fact during 2014 the Police formally identified 17 victims of human trafficking while 3 other potential victims although provided with the assistance and support required did not provide concrete information to prove elements of human trafficking. So far 2 alleged traffickers were arraigned in court for charges of trafficking in human beings, both for sexual and labour exploitation. For the first time in Malta a single case revealed 10 victims trafficked for the purpose of labour exploitation. . Two high-ranking officials from a foreign owned textile factory are currently going through preliminary Court compilation of evidence proceedings as they are suspected of having committed an offence of trafficking in human beings.

It is considered that the increase in the number of cases apprehended is at least partly due to past training and awareness-raising initiatives held for stakeholders in the sector.

Moreover, inspections by the Police in and around premises where human trafficking is likely to happen is always ongoing. In view of the growing awareness of the need to involve a broader spectrum of relevant actors to identify victims of trafficking for labour exploitation, the Police conduct joint inspections with Labour Inspectors in places where human trafficking is prone to occur.

- The fostering of awareness among persons vulnerable to human trafficking;

As part of the ongoing contract with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) providing of awareness initiatives also amongst persons vulnerable to human trafficking, 2 information cards were published. These cards are being placed primarily in venues, agencies and other entities whose service users can be potential victims.

- Liaison with EU and international bodies addressing human trafficking issues, including the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA);

Recommendations made by international bodies such as GRETA have been taken into account during the preparation of the Action Plan as well as in relation to the Bill that amended the Human Trafficking provisions of the Criminal Code (Cap. 9 of the Laws of Malta).

- Participation in international conferences and events, including meetings hosted by the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator; and,

Officials from the MHAS, the Police and other entities, including Aġenzija Appoġġ, have attended fora relating to human trafficking. An official from the Ministry has attended meetings hosted by the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator.

Moreover, on the international relations front, the first report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in Malta was adopted during the 10th meeting of the Committee of the Parties on February 15th 2013. The authorities took note of the recommendations in the report and took them into consideration in the implementation of the National Action plan as well as by any other action which was taken in parallel with Action Plan.

Furthermore, upon an invitation of the Committee of Parties concerning the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, a Round Table Meeting was held in Malta on July 17th 2014. The aim of this event was for the Maltese authorities to report on follow-up action taken to implement proposals made by GRETA. Government entities including the Police, the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security, the Health Ministry and other agencies as well as Non Government Organisations discussed the way forward in this regard.

A report was received by the Maltese authorities as a result of the discussions, which identifies possible areas for future co-operation activities in the field of action against human trafficking. Feedback was provided by the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security, on the report indicating that the Ministry is interested in pursuing concrete co-operation activities with the involvement of the Council of Europe.

Action was taken as follows with regard to measures scheduled for implementation during the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2014:

- **Organisation of a Conference for stakeholders to discuss activities and the results obtained during 2013**

Activities and results obtained during 2013 were discussed in the context of the Stakeholder Task Force.

- **Publication of material discussed during the conference and other relevant documentation, including guidelines for the treatment of victims of human trafficking.**

The documentation agreed upon by the Stakeholder Taskforce and the Monitoring Committee, including the local Human Trafficking Indicators and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were published on the MHAS-IOM booklet titled: “Support Tool for Service Providers on Trafficking in Human Beings and Standard Operating Procedures on Identification and Referral of (potential) Victims of Trafficking.”

The booklets were delivered to the Ministry in May and are being widely disseminated with as many relevant stakeholders as possible.

- **Ensuring protection of potential child victims of trafficking, including by way of the adoption of guidelines specific to children.**

In view of the local lack of experience as regard child trafficking, use is to be made of guidelines being developed at the EU level.

Action was also taken in relation to the following points in the Action Plan that were to be implemented during preceding quarters;

- **Review and compilation of statistical data relating to recognised human trafficking cases as well as potential cases with a view to better disaggregate such data in accordance with established best practices.**

With a view to organising mutual coordination of data from the various professionals active in the field a common tool for collecting such data was created. The Anti Trafficking Monitoring Committee shall be responsible to collect both quantitative and qualitative information from all relevant stakeholders and keep such data for reporting to the EU Commission as envisaged by the EU Directive. Therefore, national cooperation in this sphere shall encourage better reporting, identification of new trends as well as stimulating far reaching action under the both the EU Directive as well as the Council Of Europe Convention. In addition, it is envisaged that improved standardisation of data collection will serve as a basis for policy evaluation and for supporting strategic analysis. Stakeholders were provided with training in order that they are sensitised towards collecting important information in accordance to National Indicators in this field.

- **Closure of 2nd National Action Plan and beginning of 3rd National Action Plan**

The 3rd National Action Plan on Human Trafficking (January 2014 – December 2015) will continue to build on past policy strategy envisaged to throw more emphasis on increasing knowledge and capacity amongst frontline actors about the subject of trafficking in human beings for various forms of exploitation.

The 3rd National Action Plan on Human Trafficking recognises the need for further training and capacity building of front line professionals as well as including other actors which are currently working on very closely related issues to labour exploitation such as labour inspectors. Tools will be developed for labour inspectors as well as officers working at Embassies and Consulates. Moreover, the Action Plan will seek to foster awareness among stakeholders in the migration sphere, through dissemination of information material on human trafficking, for them to be alerted to the potential for exploitation among beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers. Moreover, research will be conducted among minors and women in Open Reception centres with a view to obtaining information concerning their plans for the future as well as about their current situation.

Conclusion

Human trafficking is a complex issue with a diverse range of victims and circumstances. In the past 2 years we have seen an emerging trend towards the identification of cases of trafficking for labour exploitation. Cooperative efforts amongst stakeholders are more advanced with regard to trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation; however the forthcoming 3rd National Action Plan on Human Trafficking shall include applying lessons learned from trafficking for sexual exploitation to labour trafficking, thus employing a more integrative, flexible approach amongst relevant stakeholders. The 3rd National Action Plan shall amongst other include follow-up on past training initiatives, conducting a local research and delivery of information updates as well as discussions with the entities concerned.

With the consolidation of all activities in yet another comprehensive plan, Government is sending a clear message that the crime of human trafficking is not tolerated and that victims will be provided with the help they need and that perpetrators will be brought to justice.
