According to the European Commission, more than 30,000 cases of human trafficking have been registered in the European Union in three years.

The European Commission report states that 80% of the victims of this trafficking are women. 69% of victims were sexually exploited.

Two thirds of victims of trafficking are EU citizens. Citizens of China and Nigeria also often suffer from criminals.

According to the European Commission, about 1,000 children who have been sexually abused are trafficked.

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COUNTERING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CYPRUS

Human trafficking is the **trade** of humans for the purpose of **forced labour**, **sexual slavery**, or **commercial sexual exploitation** for the trafficker or others. Human trafficking is a crime against the person because of the violation of the victim's rights of movement through coercion and because of their commercial **exploitation**.

Human trafficking is the trade in people, especially women and children, and does not necessarily involve the movement of the person from one place to another. Human trafficking is the third largest crime industry in the world, behind **drug dealing** and **arms trafficking**, and is the fastest-growing activity of trans-national criminal organizations.

Trafficked people are held against their will through acts of coercion, and forced to work for or provide services to the trafficker or others. The work or services may include anything from bonded or forced labour to commercial sexual exploitation. The arrangement may be structured as a work contract, but with no or low payment, or on terms which are highly exploitative. Sometimes the arrangement is structured as **debt bondage**, with the victim not being permitted or able to pay off the debt.

The Government of Cyprus fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period; therefore Cyprus remained on Tier 1. These efforts included prosecuting more traffickers and increasing funds to the government-run shelter. The government strengthened child protection measures by opening a children's house to provide support services to child victims and allocating funds to an NGO to operate a day care center for children of trafficking victims. The government also strengthened prevention efforts by admitting four NGOs into the Multidisciplinary Coordinating Group and commissioning a study to identify gaps in prosecutions

The government maintained law enforcement efforts. Law 60(I) of 2014 criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment for offenses involving an adult victim and up to 20 years' imprisonment for those involving a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those for serious crimes, such as rape.

The Ministry of Justice and Public Order maintained an anti-trafficking unit (ATU) that conducted proactive investigations. ATU reported the absence of legislation allowing the use of electronic surveillance hampered their ability to collect sufficient evidence and corroborate victim-witness testimonies. ATU and the Internal Affairs Unit arrested and prosecuted four immigration police officers on suspicion of aiding a criminal network involved in trafficking.

The human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Cyprus. Traffickers subject women, primarily from Eastern Europe, Vietnam, India, and sub-Saharan Africa, to sex trafficking. Sex trafficking occurs in private apartments and hotels, on the street, and within commercial sex outlets in Cyprus, including bars, pubs, coffee shops, and cabarets. Traffickers recruit some female sex trafficking victims with false promises of marriage or work as barmaids or hostesses. Traffickers subject foreign migrant workers—primarily from South and Southeast Asia—to forced labor in agriculture.

Migrant workers subjected to labor trafficking are recruited by employment agencies and enter the country on short-term work permits; after the permits expire, they are often subjected to debt-based coercion, threats, and withholding of pay and documents. Domestic workers from India, Nepal, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka are vulnerable to forced labor. Traffickers subject asylum seekers from Southeast Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe to forced labor in agriculture and domestic work.

According to the Cypriot authorities, an emerging trend has been the abuse of visa regimes by criminal networks in order to bring persons into the country for exploitation. Young women from Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova arrive in Cyprus on tourist visas which can be obtained from the Internet on biometric passports. Intermediaries reportedly also use tourist visas to bring thirdcountry nationals to Cyprus, putting them in a precarious situation and at a heightened risk of exploitation.

There has been an increase in trafficking for the purpose of "sham marriages", a trend already highlighted in GRETA's second report,5 most of the victims being vulnerable young women from Bulgaria and Romania.

Criminal networks increasingly use the internet, social media and communication technologies to recruit victims, as well as maintaining websites that facilitate trafficking and exploitation, such as escort services.

In 2019, amendments were made to the anti-trafficking legislation, which significantly increased fines for human trafficking and established criminal liability. The Multidisciplinary Coordination Group has adopted a new National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings 2019-2021.

In addition, a National Referral Mechanism was established in 2016 to identify and refer assistance to victims of trafficking. However, GRETA is concerned that no legal assistance was provided to victims of trafficking in persons during the period under review (2015-2019) and the General Prosecutor's Office approved only two applications for legal assistance with a view to obtaining compensation.

There are no examples of compensation provided by the decision of a trafficking judge. In addition, the creation of a victim support fund that can be used to compensate victims of human trafficking has been delayed and no victim of human trafficking has yet received government compensation in Cyprus. In this regard, GRETA calls on the Cypriot authorities to ensure that victims receive specialized legal aid and free legal aid at an early stage in criminal proceedings and to establish a victim support fund as a priority.

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