



DELEGATION: The United Kingdom

COMMITTEE: Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Committee

QUESTION OF: Worldwide Prevention of Human Trafficking

The United Kingdom, also known as the UK, is a sovereign country located in Western Europe. It is made up of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Its capital is London and its official language is English.

The UK has a population of approximately 66 million people and is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy. The Queen is the head of state, but the Prime Minister is the head of government. The UK has a rich cultural history and has been a major world power in the past, with a significant influence in areas such as politics, literature, and the arts.

The UK is a highly developed country with a diverse economy, including industries such as finance, manufacturing, and services. The currency used is the pound sterling, and the country is a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, and the European Union (although it left the EU on January 31, 2020).

The United Kingdom has taken various steps to combat human trafficking, which is a serious crime that affects vulnerable individuals and undermines their basic human rights. Some of the actions taken by the UK to address human trafficking include:

Enacting laws and policies: The UK has enacted several laws and policies to address human trafficking, including the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which consolidates previous laws and provides stronger protections for victims of human trafficking.

Providing support for victims: The UK government has established a national referral mechanism (NRM) to identify and support victims of human trafficking. The NRM provides victims access to legal aid, housing, and medical care, among other services.

Strengthening law enforcement: The UK has strengthened its law enforcement response to human trafficking by increasing the resources allocated to investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases. It has also established specialist trafficking units within the police force.

Increasing international cooperation: The UK has worked with international partners to combat human trafficking, including through the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Raising public awareness: The UK government has launched public awareness campaigns to raise awareness of human trafficking and encourage the public to report suspected cases of trafficking.

Our efforts included prosecuting and convicting significantly more traffickers and issuing revised sentencing guidelines in England and Wales with recommended increased penalties for some traffickers. Additionally, the government identified more victims, expanded the Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTG) program, and took steps to improve victim support, including by providing specialist support for some victims to navigate the criminal justice process and providing accommodation for some victims upon identification.

Furthermore, the government launched a fund to support organizations in delivering targeted prevention activities and to build evidence of effective interventions, and ministerial government departments published their first annual modern slavery statements setting out measures they took to prevent trafficking in their operations and supply chains.

The UK participated in 17 Joint Investigation Teams with EU Member States and EUROPOL, including a complex sex trafficking investigation targeting a Romanian organized criminal group operating in Scotland, England, and Romania and resulting in the arrest of approximately 27 Romanian nationals and the identification of more than 30 trafficking victims throughout Europe. The government convicted members of an international organized criminal group in 2021, including five Slovak nationals who committed trafficking crimes in Slovakia and the UK, with prison sentences ranging from four to eight years. *

Northern Irish authorities cooperated closely with Irish counterparts on law enforcement efforts across the island of Ireland. The supreme court's final decision on a 2019 ruling by the Employment Tribunal that diplomatic immunity did not protect against trafficking charges remained pending at the end of the reporting period. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in trafficking crimes.

Although observers noted the MSA did not include a mechanism to ensure compliance, the government continued to require organizations with annual turnover exceeding £36 million (\$48.65 million) to publish an annual statement on the government's modern slavery statement registry outlining efforts to ensure its operations and supply chains were free of human trafficking. A progress report on the government's efforts to achieve the objectives outlined in the 2020–2021 UK Government Modern Slavery Statement was published in November 2021, and ministerial government departments also released their first annual modern slavery statements outlining the steps they took to prevent trafficking in their supply chains. The government introduced a virtual course in July 2021 on how to recognize and reduce human trafficking for public sector business employees. *

Overall, the UK has taken a comprehensive approach to addressing human trafficking, with a focus on prevention, protection, and prosecution. While more work remains to be done, the UK's efforts have helped to raise awareness of this issue and provide support for victims of trafficking.

*: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/united-kingdom/>