**Topic A: Insufficiency of Migration Channels of Women and Children Refugee: Risk of Human Trafficking**

**Country: Bulgaria**

**Committe: Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)**

**Delegate: Adrik Bafi**

Bulgaria is a primary source country for human trafficking, meaning victims are often found and recruited within its boundaries.The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, which Bulgaria has adopted, defines trafficking in persons to include the recruitment, transportation and transfer by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion for the purpose of exploitation. In Bulgaria, trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation remains the prevailing form of exploitation, however, the number of trafficking victims for labor exploitation and forced begging continues to grow as well. As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Bulgaria, and traffickers exploit victims from Bulgaria abroad.Traffickers exploit Bulgarian women and children in sex trafficking throughout Western Europe and in Bulgaria, particularly in the capital, resort areas, and border towns. Bulgarians of Turkish ethnicity and Romania women and girls account for most of the sex trafficking victims identified in Bulgaria. Authorities report an uptick in internal sex trafficking, which they attribute to international travel restrictions resulting from the pandemic. Also due to the pandemic, traffickers increasingly use the internet and social media to recruit victims. Traffickers typically recruit and exploit women and girls from poorer regions of the country. According to authorities, sex trafficking rings typically consist of Bulgarian traffickers who cooperate with foreign nationals in destination countries but have no direct ties to foreign organized crime groups. A UN special rapporteur report found child sex exploitation prevalent among children living in government-run institutions, particularly children from marginalized communities. Asylum-seekers and migrants from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq, some of whom may be or may become trafficking victims, transit Bulgaria an route to Western Europe.

The Government of Bulgaria increased prevention efforts. The government continued to implement the 2017-2021 national anti-trafficking strategy and adopted the annual national program for combating trafficking and victim protection for implementing strategy activities with a budget of 440,400 lev ($276,290), an increase from 401,000 lev ($251,570) in 2019. The Commission published an annual report of the government’s anti-trafficking efforts, monitored the activities of the 10 local anti-trafficking commissions, and assessed the quality of services provided at the specialized government-run shelters and crisis centers. NGOs expressed concerns about the lack of high-level government support and public commitment to combating trafficking and the future of the Commission.In 2020, the Commission conducted multiple national awareness campaigns, including campaigns on labor trafficking involving information sessions and workshops with vulnerable groups and on sex trafficking targeting students and children. Local anti-trafficking commissions executed more than 50 prevention projects (70 in 2019), reaching more than 30,000 people, including vulnerable groups. Additionally, GDBOP officers held trafficking awareness discussions with 80 school students in Sofia. The government continued to support an NGO-run hotline for victims of violence, including trafficking, allocating 65,000 lev ($40,780), the same amount as in 2019 and 2018.

To Proposals Trafficking victims are often recruited in areas with high unemployment rates and severe poverty. The Government of Bulgaria needs to prioritize to organize more awareness campaigns for combatting Human Trafficking. If they were to allocate a more significant amount of funding towards their National Commission, not only could they spread more awareness throughout the country but it would give victims confidence that their government is working to protect them.

Raise awareness among other societal stakeholders, including employers, consumers and migrant communities, of their role in preventing smuggling and its consequences for migrants.

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2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Bulgaria - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/bulgaria>

Against Trafficking in Human Beings Bulgaria - <https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-countries/bulgaria_en>