

Finland

Phenomenon

The number of identified victims of trafficking applying to the referral system has been increasing in the past few years. Also the amount of criminal investigations on trafficking in human beings or related crimes has been on a rise. The increase in the number of identified victims and criminal investigations are results of increasing awareness of the phenomenon and the means of providing support services and assistance for the victims of these crimes. Still there remains huge need for practical information and awareness rising especially with the focus on the victim's human rights approach.

The proportion of victims of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation in the National Assistance System has been considerably low compared with the victims identified from other labor sectors and with international numbers. The low number of identified victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation has remained as a widely discussed concern in Finland. In the same time the provision 148 § on expulsion and refusal of entry in to country for third country nationals if the person is suspected to sell sexual services remains in the Finnish Aliens Act. NGO's and the Finnish National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings have criticized the consequences of the implementation of the provision 148 § on the vulnerable position of the persons suspected to sell sexual services in general and on the possible victims of trafficking in human beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

National Anti-trafficking legislation and institutions

The National Steering Group managing the implementation of the revised Plan of Action

against trafficking in human beings has finished its functioning in the end of 2010. The Steering Group gave recommendations to develop the actions against THB in the beginning of year 2011. Recommendations included appointment of two different working groups aiming to develop the national legislation and policies.

The first group appointed is the Ministry of Justice's working group of experts, who will discuss and reform for example the status of the plaintiff in the juridical proceedings concerning criminal acts such as pandering/pimping and trafficking in human beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation. There is one NGO representative in the working group. The group started to work in the beginning of 2012.

The Ministry of Interior has also established a working group to develop the legislation and policies concerning the identification and assistance for victims of trafficking and the transmission of information among the authorities and other parties involved in the processes concerning the assistance for victims of trafficking. A separate law concerning trafficking in human beings is planned to replace the acts and provisions concerning the assistance of victims in the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum seekers and in the Aliens Act. The group begins its work in February 2012. There are representatives from three Finnish NGO's in the working group.

Identification, protection of rights, and referral

The reflection period for victims of trafficking is not used in the identification process. There are no clear practices how the reflection period should be implemented. The number of identified victims of trafficking in human beings referred to the assistance system for victims of trafficking has been on a rise.

The decision making process concerning the residence permits for the victims of trafficking has still been unreasonably long and unpredictable and the number of these permits remain low (for example only one permit in 2010).

Prevention

The Finnish Parliament is in the process of ratifying the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Council of Europe. The Convention will be ratified and the necessary legislation changes implemented during year 2012.