

Seminar on Nordic Best Practices against Trafficking in Human Beings

Sharing best practices in the work against trafficking
in human beings in the Nordic countries and enhancing
Nordic anti-human trafficking cooperation



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Seminar on Nordic Best Practices against Trafficking in Human Beings

Sharing best practices in the work against trafficking in human beings in the Nordic countries and enhancing Nordic anti-human trafficking cooperation

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Abstract

The Seminar on the Nordic Best Practices against Trafficking in Human Beings was organized as part of the Finnish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The objective of the project was to exchange best practices and learn from each other as well as discuss and identify needs for further Nordic cooperation. The approach of the project was practice-oriented. The focus was on practical work, implemented best practices and sharing of ideas, information and contacts for further development of ways of working.

The project contributed to identifying needs for further Nordic anti-human trafficking cooperation. As part of the project, experts offered a broad insight into the needs for enhanced cooperation. Experts' views compiled in this report will be taken into account in a study that the Nordic Council of Ministers of Justice (MR-JUST) has agreed on. The needs for further anti-human trafficking cooperation will be discussed in the next MR-JUST meeting in 2022.

The conclusions of the project, emerging from the seminar, expert interviews and the side events, are presented in the last chapter of the report. During the project, a concrete need for closer cooperation among Nordic countries in the work against trafficking in human beings became apparent and possibilities to establish more formalized cooperation structures were suggested.

Keywords	human trafficking, Nordic cooperation, cooperation, crime prevention
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Seminaari ihmiskaupan vastaisen työn parhaista käytännöistä Pohjoismaissa

Ihmiskaupan vastaisen työn parhaiden käytäntöjen jakaminen ja pohjoismaisen yhteistyön tiivistäminen ihmiskaupan vastaisessa toiminnassa

Oikeusministeriön julkaisuja, Selvityksiä ja ohjeita 2022:5		Teema	Selvityksiä ja ohjeita
Julkaisija	Oikeusministeriö		
Yhteisötekijä	Oikeusministeriö		
Kieli	englanti	Sivumäärä	65

Tiivistelmä

Ihmiskaupan vastaisen työn parhaita käytäntöjä Pohjoismaissa käsittelevä seminaari järjestettiin osana Suomen puheenjohtajakautta Pohjoismaiden ministerineuvostossa. Hankkeen tavoitteena oli jakaa parhaita käytäntöjä, siten oppia muilta sekä tunnistaa, millaisia pohjoismaisen yhteistyön tarpeita alalla on ja keskustella niistä. Hankkeen lähestymistapa oli käytännönläheinen. Siinä keskityttiin käytännön työhön, käytännössä toteutettuihin ja hyväksi havaittuihin toimenpiteisiin sekä ideoiden, tiedon ja kontaktien jakamiseen työtapojen jatkokehittämistä varten.

Hanke auttoi osaltaan tunnistamaan pohjoismaisen ihmiskaupan vastaisen yhteistyön tiivistämistarpeita. Osana hanketta asiantuntijat kertoivat laajalti näkemyksiään tiiviimmän yhteistyön tarpeista. Tähän raporttiin kootut asiantuntijoiden näkemykset tullaan ottamaan huomioon selvityksessä, josta pohjoismaisen oikeusasioden ministerineuvosto (MR-JUST) on sopinut. Ihmiskaupan vastaisen yhteistyön lisäämisen tarpeista keskustellaan seuraavassa oikeusasioden ministerineuvoston kokouksessa vuonna 2022.

Seminaarin, asiantuntijoiden haastattelujen ja oheistapahtumien pohjalta tehdyt hankkeen loppupäätelmät esitellään raportin viimeisessä luvussa. Hankkeen aikana kävi selväksi, että Pohjoismaiden väliselle tiiviimmälle yhteistyölle ihmiskaupan vastaisessa työssä on konkreettinen tarve, ja tästä syystä virallisempien yhteistyörakenteiden perustamista ehdotettiin.

Asiasanat	ihmiskauppa, pohjoismaisen yhteistyö, rikosentorjunta, yhteistyö		
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Seminarium om nordisk bästa praxis mot människohandel

Dela bästa praxis i arbetet mot människohandel i de nordiska länderna och stärka det nordiska samarbetet mot människohandel

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Referat

Seminariet om nordisk bästa praxis mot människohandel anordnades som en del av det finska ordförandeskapet i Nordiska ministerrådet. Projektets mål var att utbyta bästa praxis och lära av varandra samt diskutera och identifiera behov av ytterligare nordiskt samarbete. I tillvägagångssättet var projektet praktiskt orienterat. Fokus låg på praktiskt arbete, implementering av bästa praxis och utbyte av idéer, information och kontakter för vidareutveckling av arbetssätt.

Projektet bidrog till att identifiera behov av ytterligare nordiskt samarbete mot människohandel. Som en del av projektet erbjöd experter breda inblickar i behovet av utökat samarbete. Experternas synpunkter som sammanställs i denna rapport kommer att beaktas i en studie som Nordiska justitieministerrådet (MR-JUST) har enats om. Behovet av ytterligare samarbete mot människohandel kommer att diskuteras vid nästa MR-JUST-möte år 2022.

Projektets slutsatser, som framkommit ur seminariet, expertintervjuerna och sidoevenemangen, presenteras i rapportens sista kapitel. Under projektet har ett konkret behov av ett närmare samarbete mellan de nordiska länderna i arbetet mot människohandel framkommit och möjligheter att etablera mer formaliserade samsamarbetsstrukturer föreslogs.

Nyckelord människohandel, nordiskt samarbete, brottsbekämpning, samarbete

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SUMMARY

The Seminar on the Nordic Best Practices against Trafficking in Human Beings was organized as part of the Finnish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The seminar was curated by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Government Anti-Trafficking Coordinator of Finland, with support from the Nordic Council of Ministers. The programme of the seminar was planned and carried out in close cooperation with experts from all Nordic countries.

Nordic cooperation against human trafficking was one of Finland's priorities during the presidency. The anti-human trafficking agenda of the seminar also promoted the priority of socially sustainable Nordic region in the Vision 2030 and is in line with the priorities of the Nordic Council of Ministers in the cooperation programme for justice sector on combating cross-border crime for the years 2019-2022. Combating cross-border crime is seen as the most important priority area for Nordic cooperation in a [study](#) conducted by the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The objective of the project was to exchange best practices and learn from each other as well as discuss and identify needs for further Nordic cooperation. In addition to the seminar, these themes were discussed in two separate side events that were organized by the Helsinki Police Department and Finland's National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking and in separate expert interviews.

The approach of the project was practice-oriented. The focus was on practical work, implemented best practices and sharing of ideas, information and contacts for further development of ways of working.

The project contributed to identifying needs for further Nordic anti-human trafficking cooperation. At the seminar and the side events as well as in the interviews, experts offered a broad insight into the needs for enhanced cooperation. Experts' views compiled in this report will be taken into account in a study that the Nordic Council of Ministers of Justice (MR-JUST) has agreed on. The MR-JUST has called for mapping the needs for further anti-human trafficking cooperation in order to discuss necessary measures in the next MR-JUST meeting in 2022.

The Seminar on Nordic Best Practices against Trafficking in Human Beings, held on 18 November 2021, brought together 85 experts in the areas of prevention and combatting trafficking in human beings from Nordic countries, Estonia and international organizations in Helsinki. Parts I and III of the seminar were streamed online and 216 online participants from all Nordic countries and beyond registered to follow the seminar online. The seminar reached an audience of 300 altogether. Both authorities and actors of the civil society working to combat trafficking in human beings were represented.

Part I of the seminar gave a big picture on the work against trafficking in human beings in different European contexts including the European Union and Nordic Countries. Part II consisted of workshop sessions where participants present in Helsinki shared their expertise on the countries' best practices. Part III concluded with the results from the workshops, greetings from side events and conclusions of the seminar.

The seminar was not limited to a specific form of human trafficking, a specific group of victims or a specific part of the process but these topics were discussed simultaneously. Information and expertise shared at the seminar will support professionals in their work on prevention of trafficking in human beings.

In connection with the seminar, two side events were organized in Helsinki on 17 November 2021. Helsinki Police Department organized a meeting for Nordic human trafficking crime inspectors where investigation procedures, cross-border phenomena in human trafficking and case examples were discussed. Finland's National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking organized a workshop for Nordic experts to discuss challenges and successes in victim assistance. Results of the side events are included in this report.

The conclusions of the project, emerging from the seminar, expert interviews and the side events, are presented in the last chapter of the report. During the project, a concrete need for closer cooperation among Nordic countries in the work against trafficking in human beings became apparent and possibilities to establish more formalized cooperation structures were suggested.

1 Seminar proceeding

1.1 Opening of the seminar

Minister of Justice of Finland, Anna-Maja Henriksson

Minister of Justice of Finland, Anna-Maja Henriksson, emphasized that the efforts of the whole society are needed to combat trafficking in human beings. Cross-sectoral approach and strong international cooperation are key elements in successful anti-trafficking efforts.

Henriksson stressed that Nordic cooperation against human trafficking is one of Finland's priorities during the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2021. Suggestions concerning closer cooperation that come up during the seminar, would be taken into account when charting the needs for closer cooperation. The Nordic Ministers of Justice would discuss the necessary measure based on these studies at their next year's meeting.

Henriksson emphasized the Finnish Government's strong will to move forward with the work against trafficking in human beings through a collaborative work by various ministries and agencies. The Finnish Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2021–2023 aims at stepping up anti-trafficking efforts and improving the position of victims. To promote the cross-sectoral approach, the Government has appointed a Government Anti-Trafficking Coordinator for the current government term.

Various anti-trafficking measures have been taken in different Ministries. For example, the Ministry of Justice is examining ways to improve the status of victims of human trafficking in the criminal procedure. The Ministry of the Interior is taking a number of measures to prevent and detect trafficking in human beings and promote the recovery of victims. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is working to ensure that victims of human trafficking receive the services they are entitled to under legislation. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, a project is exploring means to combat the exploitation of foreign labour.

More information: Finland fights human trafficking - Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings, 2021–2023, <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163326>

Minister of the Interior of Finland, Maria Ohisalo

In her speech, Minister of the Interior of Finland, Maria Ohisalo stressed the need for joint international efforts to combat trafficking in human beings.

Ohisalo emphasized the importance of policy decisions in promoting anti-trafficking work and described how strong political will has contributed to establishing better conditions for anti-trafficking work in Finland. Solutions at the level of policy are especially necessary when constructing and developing the interdepartmental aspects that are explicitly involved in anti-trafficking work.

In the administrative branch of the Ministry of the Interior, several parties are involved in combating human trafficking, including the police, the Border Guard and the Finnish Immigration Service.

The Government has allocated funds to the police for establishing a special task force to combat and prevent trafficking. The task force has actively networked with other authorities both in Finland and abroad. Its operations have successfully detected serious criminal offences in various parts of Finland involving strong indications of human trafficking.

The Border Guard is currently investigating the prospects for expanding its investigative powers with respect to human trafficking offences.

1.2 Part I – Joint Efforts in the Work against Trafficking in Human Beings

1.2.1 What should Governments do more to prevent trafficking in human beings?

Itohan Okundaye, Member of the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC)

Okundaye stressed the importance of hearing the survivors of trafficking in human beings in all anti-trafficking efforts. The survivors should be involved in all law making and policy-making processes. Based on their own experiences, the survivors have a specific understanding and can provide deeper views on what can be done to combat human trafficking.

Okundaye argued for establishing a Nordic survivor advisory council. The Nordic survivor advisory council should be heard every time when the Nordic countries gather on anti-trafficking matters. Members of a survivor advisory council should be appointed taking into account their specific knowledge and the goals of anti-trafficking work in the area. Local survivor councils do not exist in the Nordic countries yet.

Okundaye called for more cooperation among Nordic governments, which is ever more necessary in the post-pandemic time. Nordic countries should carefully look into the effects of the pandemic in human trafficking and address the new challenges with targeted strategies. In particular, the issues of impunity and demand should be better addressed.

When enforcing the criminal liability, new forms of trafficking need to be addressed. Victims are increasingly trafficked online. Impunity has to be addressed also in the labour market and more active labour inspection is needed.

Due to the pandemic, the position of those most vulnerable has become even more vulnerable than before which entails a higher exposure to recruitment into human trafficking. International cooperation is needed to address the root causes of trafficking, such as famine and lack of shelter or necessities. The pandemic has also affected to an increase of demand in many countries.

Okundaye emphasized that all actors of the society, such as leaders, communities, non-governmental organizations and religious leaders should be involved in the anti-trafficking cooperation.

Okundaye reminded that anti-trafficking measures have to be included even in the supply chains and procurements. There should be supply changes to make sure that that supply chains are responsible.

Okundaye concluded by stressing the importance of cooperation among Nordic countries and among all actors of the society. Okundaye called for concrete actions to assure that no one is deprived of their fundamental rights through the suffering that trafficking in human beings implies for the victim.

Recommendations for a more inclusive anti-trafficking response

- The survivors of trafficking in human beings should be involved in all anti-trafficking efforts, including law making and policy-making processes.
- A Nordic survivor advisory council should be established. The council should be heard every time when the Nordic countries gather on anti-trafficking matters.
- The Nordic countries should carefully look into the effects of the pandemic in human trafficking and address the emerging challenges with targeted strategies.
- In particular, the issues of impunity and demand should be better addressed in relation to different forms of trafficking. New forms of trafficking need to be addressed, including increasing trafficking online.

1.2.2 EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings

Diane Schmitt, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator

The new EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the years 2021 until 2025 provides a comprehensive response and a cross-sectoral approach to trafficking from prevention to prosecution and conviction of traffickers while ensuring that victims are protected at all stages.

Schmitt acknowledged that the members of the Nordic Council of Ministers are very experienced in the area of anti-trafficking and hoped for input from the Nordic countries regarding the implementation of the different aspects of the EU strategy.

Evaluation of the EU anti-trafficking directive is one of the main priorities under the new strategy, with the possibility to consider new legislation based on the results of the evaluation. Schmitt hoped for the Nordic countries' input in a public consultation on the legislative project, especially regarding criminalization of the use of services of trafficked victims. Schmitt stressed reducing the demand as one of the priorities of the strategy.

She also drew attention to the importance of prevention and mentioned that the European Commission is organizing a prevention campaign targeting high risk sectors together with national authorities and civil society organizations.

Dialogue with internet and technology companies is essential to reduce the increasing use of online platforms for all phases trafficking. The changing business models of traffickers must be broken both offline and online.

To tackle the culture of impunity, the European Commission will enhance law enforcement and judicial cross-border cooperation. The European Commission and Eurojust will facilitate the creation of a focus group of specialised prosecutors against trafficking in human beings.

In the area of supporting and empowering victims, the strategy seeks to improve the early identification of victims. The European Commission is funding training for different actors and seeks to promote setting up a European referral cooperation mechanism.

More information: The EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files_en?file=2021-04/14042021_eu_strategy_on_combatting_trafficking_in_human_beings_2021-2025_com-2021-171-1_en.pdf

1.2.3 Iceland: Creating the new Icelandic National Action Plan against trafficking in human beings – How human trafficking became a political priority and what are the successes?

Hildur Sunna Pálmadóttir, Legal Advisor at the Ministry of Justice of Iceland and Alda Hrönn Jóhannsdóttir, Police Prosecutor at at Suðurnes police

Need for a high-level political support

Pálmadóttir and Jóhannsdóttir described patterns and actions that have shown to be effective during the process of creating the Icelandic National Action Plan against trafficking in human beings. They illustrated the importance of multi-sectoral, collaborative approach as well as political will using the progress in Iceland as an example.

The effects of the lack of high-level political support were illustrated by the weak implementation of the first two Action Plans that were in place in 2009-2012 and in 2013-2016, and the gaps between the periods of validity of the Action Plans. A systematic approach was difficult to develop due to a certain lack of governmental will and funding, lack of cooperation and lack of knowledge.

The third, current Action Plan was established in 2019 and a clear progress can be seen in its objectives, structure and overall political commitment to implement the Action Plan. The turning point for a more systematic and robust anti-trafficking response was characterized by the appointment of a government and individual Ministers whose priorities included assistance of victims of violence and human trafficking as well as gender equality.

Establishing a well-structured, multisectoral response

The current Action Plan contains ten realistic, generally worded actions with only one of them having a time limit. A wide scope for implementation allows for the ownership of the authorities implementing and developing the actions. The previous two Action Plans contained both 25 actions many of which were not finalized during the validation period.

The current Action Plan is based on the objectives of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. Efficient oversight is secured by a consultation-group consisting of 35 members, both from government entities, NGO's and members from the private sector, gathers at least twice a year to ensure the implementation of the actions. The government supports the implementation by providing funding for the actions and by taking initiatives to update and implement legislation.

Amendments of the article of the General Penal Code on human trafficking have been made to strengthen the protection of victims and increase the probability of indictments and convictions. New forms of exploitation such as forced marriage as well as aiding and abetting were added to the article.

A National Referral Mechanism was established under the responsibility of the Family Justice Centre Bjarkarhlíð and during the trial period its work has turned out to be successful. An online informational hub on human trafficking has been created in cooperation with government agencies and NGOs. Education and training for professionals has been strengthened by different actors such as the Police Academy, the Director of Public Prosecution and the Icelandic Red Cross.

Pálmadóttir and Jóhannsdóttir emphasized that combating trafficking in human beings requires a comprehensive response of the whole society. Both co-operation between government entities, NGO's and the private sector and a strong political support are crucial. Under the current Action Plan, the responsibilities of different actors are defined clearly to avoid overlaps and gaps between mandates.

Iceland is building a culture based on ownership, knowledge sharing, partnerships, cooperation and continuous progress in the work against human trafficking. The results of the new approach have already started showing and the first human trafficking case in 11 years has been prosecuted this year.

Success factors of the Icelandic Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings

- High-level political support is a prerequisite for establishing a cross-sectoral, collaborative anti-trafficking response.
- All aspects of anti-trafficking work are taken into account: prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships.
- A comprehensive response of the whole society is strived for. Responsibilities of different actors are defined clearly to avoid overlaps and gaps between mandates.
- Generally worded actions and a wide scope for implementation allow for the ownership of the authorities implementing and developing the actions.
- Efficient oversight is secured by a consultation-group consisting of both government entities, NGO's and members from the private sector that gathers regularly to ensure the implementation of the actions.
- The government supports the implementation by providing funding for the actions when needed and by taking initiatives to update and implement legislation.

1.2.4 Finland: The National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings – How Independent Reporting Mechanism Strengthens the Work against Trafficking in Human Beings?

Kristina Stenman, Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland

The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman acts as the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings

In Finland, the independent Non-Discrimination Ombudsman acts as Finland's National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings. Stenman presented the mandate of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman and the strength of the National Rapporteur mechanism.

The task of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman is to supervise Finland's compliance with international human rights obligations and the effectiveness of national legislation in this regard. The Ombudsman has a statutory mandate to promote equality and can intervene in discrimination experienced by individuals with a low threshold. Furthermore, the Ombudsman monitors the enforcement of removal from the country and promotes the status and rights of foreign nationals.

The mandate of National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings is included in the mandate of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman since 2009. The National Rapporteur's mandate in Finland follows the OSCE recommendations and it has had an important role in bringing the trafficking questions on the political agenda, especially through its reports.

Independent, knowledge-based work has an influence over national legislation

The efficiency of the National Rapporteur institution is based on its independence and stability outside the direct government policy, which enables a critical approach. The National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings has a statutory mandate to supervise compliance with international human rights obligations in the field of anti-trafficking. The Rapporteur seeks to actively promote human rights of the victims in an action-oriented way. Non-governmental organizations are important partners of the Rapporteur.

The National Rapporteur has an access to the highest political level due to its legal mandate to give knowledge-based and targeted recommendations to the parliament and the government. The National Rapporteur is thus able to have an impact on national legislation and anti-human trafficking work. The Rapporteur provides an annual report to the government and a wider in-depth report to the parliament every four years. The report to the parliament is discussed in all relevant parliamentary committees, which also hear experts during the reading in committee. A broad discussion in the parliament guarantees

visibility to the themes addressed in the report. The plenary session also discusses the report and adopts a statement based on the Rapporteur's report requiring action by the government. The parliament's statement founds a good ground for anti-human trafficking policy development for the following government term.

The Rapporteur has a strong access to information, including individual cases and details of criminal convictions. This enables an efficient assessment of compliance with international agreements on human trafficking and evaluation of the national legislation. Access to classified information is beneficial also in the Rapporteur's task to conduct studies.

The Rapporteur may even take cases to the highest legality control bodies such as the Parliamentary Ombudsman whose decisions are legally binding to the authorities. The Rapporteur's mandate also includes providing professionals with advice, proposals and recommendations, expressing opinions on shortcomings observed in anti-trafficking action even beyond the published reports and studies.

Stenman stressed a need for a concrete Nordic partnership that can make the Nordic countries' voice stronger in the European Union. She stressed that anti-trafficking work should be included in the Nordic agenda of human rights and the Nordic countries' development policies and commitments to sustainable development. She suggested that funding by the Nordic Council of Ministers could be used for common Nordic anti-trafficking research.

Success factors of the independent National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings

- The National Rapporteur's mandate in Finland follows the OSCE recommendations and it has had an important role in bringing the trafficking questions on the political agenda, especially through its reports.
- The efficiency of the National Rapporteur institution is based on its independence and stability outside the direct government policy, which enables a critical approach.
- The National Rapporteur has a statutory mandate to supervise compliance with international human rights obligations in the field of anti-trafficking. The Rapporteur seeks to actively promote human rights of the victims in an action-oriented way.

- Non-governmental organizations are important partners of the Rapporteur.
- The National Rapporteur is able to have an impact on national legislation and anti-trafficking policy based on its legal mandate to give knowledge-based and targeted recommendations to the government and the parliament. The Rapporteur provides an annual report to the government and a wider in-depth report to the parliament every four years. The parliament discusses the report in all relevant parliamentary committees and in the plenary and adopts a statement which forms a good ground for anti-human trafficking policy development for the following government term. The reporting practice involves the parliament strongly in the anti-trafficking policy development.
- The Rapporteur has a strong access to information, including individual cases and details of criminal convictions.
- The Rapporteur may even take cases to the highest legality control bodies such as the Parliamentary Ombudsman whose decisions are legally binding to the authorities.

Recommendations for Nordic cooperation

- A concrete Nordic partnership is needed to make the Nordic countries' voice stronger also in the European Union.
- Anti-trafficking work should be included in the Nordic agenda of human rights and the Nordic countries' development policies and commitments to sustainable development.
- Funding by the Nordic Council of Ministers would be useful for common Nordic anti-trafficking research.

1.2.5 Sweden: National Referral Mechanism – A support and protection process for victims of trafficking in human beings in Sweden

Mats Paulsson, Senior advisor at the Swedish Gender Equality Agency

Centralized coordination agency

Paulsson presented the functions of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency and the National Referral Mechanism as a best practice from Sweden. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency is responsible for the national coordination against prostitution and human trafficking. The Agency takes into account the objectives of prevention and addressing the demand in all its work.

Agencies and organizations that get in contact with victims, gather regularly in a structured network called the National Method Support Team to share information and best practices. The Gender Equality Agency also administers a support line for agencies for general guidance on the procedures. The Agency provides funding to the National Support Programme, which is the civil platform for anti-trafficking work.

The Gender Equality Agency works in a close cooperation with regional coordinators who often function as the link between the authorities and the civil society actors. A regional coordinator is appointed in each police region.

Paulsson described how Sweden is addressing challenges pointed out by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA). A non-punishment clause concerning trafficking for criminal actions entered into force in October 2021. The applicability of the reflection period for the victim to decide whether to cooperate in criminal proceedings will be broadened in 2023 in situations where there is no investigation on human trafficking going on. The Agency is also working to tackle the issues of disappearing minors and low detection of labour trafficking.

Manual clarifying the process and responsibilities in victim support and protection

The National Referral Mechanism is a manual built upon Swedish legislation, EU legislation and international conventions that seeks to ensure efficient and secure referral of persons who may have been subjected to trafficking in human beings and to offer them support and protection. The manual helps actors to navigate through the support and protection process by clarifying and raising awareness of responsibilities of each actor.

Paulsson presented the six steps of the support and protection process included in the manual. Step 1 concerns identification of victims. The support and protection process in Sweden is primarily based on a preliminary investigation, which is normally initiated

depending on the victim's decision during the 30-day reflection period whether to cooperate in criminal proceedings.

In step 2, emergency protection is provided. In step 3 needs for further social services are evaluated and information on return to the home country is provided.

After the reflection period, in step 4, a plan for long-term support is developed to determine how the victim will be supported in reintegration either in Sweden or in the home country once the legal process is completed. If the victim decides to cooperate in the criminal process, the temporary residence permit linked to the reflection period can be prolonged to six months.

Step 5 concerns support during all phases of the criminal proceedings and step 6 support for a safe return in cases where the victim returns to their home country.

Success factors of the Swedish National Referral Mechanism

- The National Referral Mechanism is a manual built upon Swedish legislation, EU legislation and international conventions that seeks to ensure efficient and secure referral of persons who may have been subjected to trafficking in human beings and to offer them support and protection.
- The manual clarifies and raises awareness of responsibilities of each actor.
- The regional coordinators play a key role in the process often acting as the link between authorities and civil society actors.
- The Gender Equality Agency, responsible for the national coordination against human trafficking, administers the National Method Support Team where actors working with victims can share information and best practices. The Agency also administers a support line for agencies and provides funding for the civil platform for anti-trafficking work.

1.2.6 Closing remarks for Part I

The Chair, Member of the Finnish Parliament Eva Biaudet, summed up the first part of the seminar.

Biaudet emphasized that survivors' contribution should be included in the development of anti-trafficking work more tightly. The involvement of survivors is crucial in view of restoring their rights as human beings and their place in the anti-trafficking work.

The Nordics should work together with the EU and international organizations against human trafficking. Finland welcomes the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the years 2021–2025 and supports the European Commission in their efforts implementing the Strategy. Biaudet reminded that anti-trafficking work is a strong remainder of the EU values and promoting them requires concrete funding for the anti-trafficking work.

Biaudet underlined that continuous efforts that are needed to keep the anti-trafficking work high on the political agenda. She praised the Icelandic example for showing the impact of both political will and dedicated cooperation of professionals. She praised the Finnish National Rapporteur institution for enabling a critical perspective. Biaudet praised the Swedish National Referral Mechanism for its multisectoral approach and tight links between the regional and national levels.

1.3 Part II – Workshops on Nordic Best Practices

1.3.1 Norway: Norwegian Police Competence Group coordinating police efforts against human trafficking and sharing knowledge

Speaker: Police superintendent Kenneth Henriksen, The National Police Competence Group against Trafficking in Human Beings, Norway

Moderator: Detective Chief Inspector Pekka Hätönen, Helsinki Police Department, Finland

Rapporteur: Senior Specialist Katja Repo, Ministry of Justice of Finland

Norway has 12 different police districts. Each of them has established an anti-trafficking unit. The police competence group acts as a link between the anti-trafficking units of different police districts in the country. The group is led by The National Criminal Investigation Service (NCIS) and it consists of police officers and prosecutors. Two representatives from KOM - the Coordination unit for Victims of Human Trafficking are also part of the group. The group's main task is to discuss current trends and to exchange intelligence, experiences from investigations and court cases, to develop new methods and to encourage cooperation. In addition, the group has a responsibility for spreading knowledge within the police about trafficking in human beings. The group has also taken part in educational activities. The group has achieved a stage where it provides a notable added value. The group meets at least once per four months to share knowledge and to promote connecting on a daily basis.

From 2020, the Competence group has established national focus areas. The group orders national intelligence products from the Intelligence department in The National Criminal Investigation Service (NCIS). Based on the information, a task force with a mandate to identify effective measures is set up. The competence group is in a good position to identify and implement effective measures nationwide. The group also has changing focus areas, such as exploitation of seasonal workers in the agricultural industry.

To ensure predictability, the group has formed “an annual wheel”, which defines the activities during the year. Possible activities include seminars, task groups and international cooperation with a strong focus on competence-enhancing measures. The annual wheel and the national focus areas provide a common direction and predictability for the group’s work.

There are many benefits on the group. It formulates a big network of experts from both the police and prosecution side, from all over the country. The composition of the group with both prosecutors and police-experts is seen as a big advantage. Together the group is stronger and more relevant. There is a low threshold to ask for help within the group. The Competence group also is considered an influential authority when considering the need for legislative changes.

Challenges in the group’s work stem, for example, from the different priorities and different competences between the police districts. On an individual level, activities in the competence group are additional to the members’ full time work in their police district. As for organizational structure, THB cases compete with drug-related crimes for resources since both are under the organized crime department. Regarding the role of the NCIS, they do not take part in investigating or leading THB investigations for the moment, but this is considered necessary in the future. Lastly, the low number of cases results in the lack of experience regarding THB.

Success factors of a police competence group

- A national competence group is a good practice, especially when local level operation is combined with a national competence group.
- It is important that both police officers and prosecutors take part in the group. The group needs to have a solid knowledge base and consist only of experts.
- To ensure good leadership, the managers should have a solid experience and enough time.

- It is important to attach the districts closely to the competence group and pursue a common vision of the group.
- To work systematically, working details, such as travelling expenses, seminars etc., need to be arranged and agreed on beforehand.
- The possibility to consult experts is essential, especially specialists in financial investigation.
- Resources and efforts are needed to improve and make the activity regular.

Recommendations on investigating human trafficking offences

- Attention should be paid to avoid gaps between the mandates of different authorities that could hinder efficient investigation, e.g. between the labour inspectorate and the police in labour trafficking cases.
- When investigating human trafficking crimes, it should be taken into account that they usually are deeply connected with drug trafficking crimes.
- It should be mandatory to have an educational course on THB for all polices.
- The police investigating trafficking in human beings should also have knowledge of the social and healthcare service system.
- It is important to achieve mutual trust with NGOs that the police works with.

Suggestions for Nordic cooperation

- A Nordic police competence group would facilitate operational police cooperation among the Nordic countries.
- Combating trafficking online could be one focus area for Nordic cooperation. A major concern is how to prevent and stop online platforms used for THB purposes from operating.

1.3.2 Sweden: Work against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation

Speaker: Deputy Chief Prosecutor Anneli Tirud Wallin, Swedish Prosecution Authority

Moderator: Senior Specialized Prosecutor Mikko Sipilä, National Prosecution Authority, Southern Finland

Rapporteur: Senior Advisor Terhi Tafari, National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking

The Swedish ban on the purchase of sexual services has existed since 1999 and is an important tool in the work against trafficking in human beings for sexual purposes. Since 2018, people who buy sex from someone who has been trafficked can also be convicted of rape in certain cases. In the workshop, prosecutor Wallin presented such a case and explained what legal tools were used in the process. Issues regarding securing evidence and international operational work were discussed.

The workshop was based on a real case, prosecuted by Prosecutor Wallin, where a sex buyer who purchased sex from a victim of trafficking in human beings was condemned of negligent rape under the Swedish Consent Law.

The case involved an 18-year-old Romanian woman, who had been exploited in prostitution in Sweden. Two Romanian men were convicted of human trafficking. Some of the sex buyers received fines and were heard as witnesses in the trafficking case.

Prosecutor Wallin, however, accused a sex buyer for rape and negligent rape under the Consent Law which was passed in 2018. The Consent Law, or more accurately voluntariness law, states that having sexual relations must be voluntary for both parties. To secure a conviction on rape in a case concerning purchase of sex, the prosecutor has to prove that the sex buyer knew that the victim was coerced to have sex.

In this case, evidence was found after gaining access to the online messages of the sex buyers through cooperation with the Romanian police force. The sex buyer who was later condemned, had left a review on the website, where the exploited woman was being advertised, expressing his dislike of the experience with a clearly overworked and exhausted woman and concluding that he suspected she was being trafficked.

The success factors and challenges in combating trafficking for sexual exploitation were discussed in the workshop.

The low number of convictions is a common problem in many other Nordic countries. The threshold of proving that the punter had known or should have known of the exploitation has been high for example in Finland and Sweden. In Sweden, many charges have been pressed under the Consent Act, but most perpetrators end up being acquitted due to lack of evidence.

In Norway, penalizing the purchase of sex seems to have resulted in less recidivism while in Sweden, punters are getting used to the fines that do not have the desired preventive effect. The normalization of being fined, however, aided the fact that the punters cooperated with the police in the example case. In Sweden, there is currently discussion about the possibility of convicting sex buyers to a custodial sentence instead of a fine.

A common challenge is that the victim often is not willing to cooperate in the criminal process. Different controlling systems and even minute amounts of money from the exploiters are likely to keep the victim loyal to the exploiters. Helpers should not underestimate the deep entanglement the victims have with their exploiters, including through spiritual juju-/voodoo covenants. Victims should be helped to overcome what they consider a curse for example, through religious guidance.

In the example case, the prosecutor applied for a temporary residence permit for the victim under the Swedish rules of a non-national victim's right to reside. The victim stayed in Sweden for six months, after which she wanted to return to her native Romania, returning only for the trial.

A victim from whom a sex buyer purchases sex does not get compensation in Sweden, however the victim in the example case received compensation for damages as a victim of negligent rape.

Success factors that made the conviction possible in this particular case on trafficking for sexual exploitation

- The victim was very cooperative because she was relieved to escape her extremely harsh situation.
- The police were able to form a trusting relationship with the victim.

- The perpetrators were arrested and placed in investigative custody, during which they were not able to contact or otherwise threaten the victim or her loved ones.
- Good cooperation between the Swedish and Romanian police forces made it possible for the police to gain information.
- The prosecutor and others visited the country of origin of the victim twice to conduct witness interviews and to take film and photographic material of the victim's initial circumstances. These visits helped the prosecutor to truly understand the difference between the living conditions and why the victim may have voluntarily left her country of origin to sell sex abroad.

Recommendations for measures against trafficking for sexual exploitation

- To tackle THB for sexual purposes, the demand of sexual services has to be tackled.
- To understand the victims reluctance to cooperate, the deep entanglement of the victim with their exploiters should not be underestimated. Victims might be controlled by different means, including through spiritual juju-/voodoo covenants. Victims should be helped to overcome what they consider a curse.

Recommendations for Nordic cooperation

- Prosecutor Wallin had cooperated with Finland and Denmark in criminal investigations and thought the cooperation had been smooth. Good tools to use within the European Union are European Investigation Orders (EIO) and European Arrest Warrants (EAW).
- Prosecutors at the workshop agreed that having met each other in person is likely to increase future communication and cooperation and information on significant cases could be exchanged also in the future.

1.3.3 Denmark: Working with North African minors trafficked into criminal activities

Speaker: Social welfare consultant Mari Børnick-Sørhaug, Danish Centre against Human Trafficking

Moderator: Coordinating Senior Adviser Pia Marttila, Victim Support Finland

Rapporteur: Deputy Director Katri Lyijynen, Joutseno Reception Centre/National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking, Finland

The Danish Centre against Human Trafficking has identified a growing concern in Denmark about young men and boys from North Africa who are exploited into criminal activities by internationally established criminal networks. The Centre has worked purposefully to gain more knowledge of this group and this form of exploitation in particular. Several initiatives have been set into place in order to enhance the knowledge of the group within the Centre, as well as to capacity build frontline and second line personnel who might meet the target group.

The Danish Centre against Human Trafficking has been determined to increase its own knowledge of trafficking into criminal actions. After collecting information, the Centre has set several initiatives in place to increase the capacity of the frontline and second line personnel who might meet the target group.

Competence building, information sharing and training are essential. In view of these goals, the Centre has enhanced cooperation with relevant partners.

The Centre has cooperated with the Red Cross asylum department in order to develop a basic and simple screening tool to help staff at the asylum centers screen the boys and young men in this target group upon arrival for indicators of trafficking.

Many actors are involved in cases where a child is a potential victim. High level of coordination between the actors has been addressed by focusing on the specific tasks of the various actors. To maintain transparency in the cooperation, the Centre has made guidelines together with the Red Cross asylum department to ensure a clear division of tasks, for the purpose of ensuring the best interest of the child.

In cases where the potential victim is on trial for a criminal offence, challenges are related to the reluctance of most victims to share their stories during the trial due to the pressure of the traffickers. The Centre is currently addressing this challenge by stressing the importance of presenting the exploitation in court. The Centre and other relevant parties need to gain more insight in the criminal proceedings and the police and prosecutors as well as lawyers need to gain more knowledge of this form of exploitation.

Success factors in the response to trafficking into criminal actions

- Competence building, information sharing and training are essential.
- High level of coordination and clear responsibilities between different actors.
- A leaflet has been developed for motivational interviews with potential victims to be used by caseworkers in the municipality and the asylum system.
- A screening tool has been developed in order to ensure that child victims can be identified in an efficient and timely manner to be used in asylum centres.
- Guidelines for ensuring the best interest of the child have been created

Recommendations for Nordic cooperation

- The Nordic countries would benefit from sharing more efficiently information on phenomena and the materials already developed in one country, such as screening tools. For example, the materials and information provided by the Danish Centre against Human Trafficking have been useful for experts in Norway.
- Sharing information on a practical level is important because the victims of trafficking into criminal actions are often mobile and the same youngsters move in several Nordic countries. The best ways to share information in a lawful manner and with due regard of data protection should be examined.

1.3.4 Finland: The multidisciplinary approach in tackling labour trafficking

Speakers: Director Natalia Ollus, The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, Coordinating Senior Adviser Pia Marttila, Victim Support Finland, Senior inspector Katja-Pia Jenu, Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland, Detective Chief Inspector Pekka Hätönen, Helsinki Police Department, Deputy Director of Reception Centre Katri Lyijynen, The Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking, Senior Specialized Prosecutor Mikko Sipilä, National Prosecution Authority, Southern Finland

Moderator: Director Natalia Ollus, The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations

Rapporteur: Senior Specialized Prosecutor Mikko Sipilä, National Prosecution Authority, Southern Finland

In comparison to other Nordic countries, labour trafficking is the most commonly identified form of human trafficking in Finland when looking at the number of identified victims. Finland also has more convictions and case law on trafficking for forced labour than the rest of the Nordic countries combined. The workshop discussed the Finnish multidisciplinary approach in tackling labour trafficking by highlighting the role of different actors in ensuring a successful outcome while protecting the rights of the victim. The aim of the workshop was to provide practical tips and share concrete lessons learned with other Nordic practitioners.

The speakers in the workshop presented one single case example in which a Southeast Asian man was exploited in an ethnic restaurant in the Helsinki region. The speakers each highlighted their own role in uncovering, investigating and prosecuting the case and protecting the victim. While the case was fictional, it was based on real case examples which had been combined into one fictional case as a means to protect the privacy of the real victims. The presenters discussed the victim sensitive working methods used by the authorities and victim service providers to ensure the trust of the victim to disclose their experience in the first place and in collecting sufficient evidence of the crime. The presenters also highlighted the close cooperation between the police, the prosecutor and the labour inspectorate and the NGO Victim Support Finland as well as the National Assistance System for Victims of Trafficking throughout the process.

In Finland, the broad interpretation of forced labour emphasizes the comprehensive control of the worker by the employer. In case law, focus has been on the position of

dependency and insecure status that can be shown by factors that hinder the person from leaving the workplace, for example.

Success factors of the multidisciplinary approach in tackling labour trafficking

- The different actors worked together during the process towards common aims: establishing criminal liability and protecting the victim.
- A low threshold first contact can be established with the NGO Victim Support Finland (RIKU). Discussions are confidential and there is no obligation for the victim to report to the police.
- The labour inspectorate has a mandate to inspect salaries and other terms of employment. They have specialised inspectors and can conduct unannounced inspections.
- The possibility to carry out joint inspections by the labour inspectorate and the police enables immediate action.
- The victim was met by trained police officers and referred to the National Assistance System for safe housing. Sensitive interviews with support from Victim Support Finland and legal aid were conducted.
- Suspects were detained to prevent influence on the victim. Evidence, such as actual working hours were validated, and the suspects' assets were seized.
- The prosecutor has an active role in investigation even though they do not lead the investigation. The prosecutor has a right to ask for certain measures and usually participates in planning the investigation together with the investigative authority.
- The National Assistance System assist victims directly or cooperates with other victim support providers (municipalities, NGOs) in assisting potential and identified victims of trafficking.

Recommendations for Nordic cooperation

- Sharing information of the best national practices was considered useful.
- As it can be difficult to find impartial, skilled interpreters in one country, Nordic countries can use interpreters from another Nordic country.

1.3.5 Denmark: The Danish Centre against Human Trafficking as the central coordinating unit and national referral mechanism

Speaker: Academic Officer Matilde Skov Danstrøm, Danish Centre against Human Trafficking

Moderator: Senior Advisor Terhi Tafari, National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking, Finland

Rapporteur: Senior Specialist Katja Repo, Ministry of Justice of Finland

The Danish Centre against Human Trafficking is a governmental body, anchored within the national board of social services. The Centre acts as the national coordinating unit between relevant actors, partners and stakeholders. The Centre is comprised of a multidisciplinary group of social workers, academic officers and a lawyer providing legal support. The tasks of the Centre are very versatile which allows it to maintain an overall picture of the phenomena and practice a holistic approach in its operations.

The set-up and tasks of the Centre provide a well-functioning system where an overall picture of the phenomena can be maintained through the day-to-day experience with potential trafficking cases, identifying victims, overall coordination, data collection and sharing of knowledge inside and outside the country.

The Centre is responsible for identification of victims, ensuring a holistic support throughout the country and for collecting and disseminating data and knowledge between different authorities, private parties and NGOs on the situation and new trends of THB in Denmark. The Centre functions also as a national referral mechanism. The Centre is also responsible for working with victims on an assisted voluntary return. In addition, the Centre can also join other authorities during inspections at work places where there is a suspicion of trafficking. The Centre is also responsible for training of relevant stakeholders, such as police officers, NGO's, health care professionals etc.

In the workshop, challenges and best practices related to central coordinating units were discussed.

A challenge is that many factors influence the victims' willingness to participate in the process and the courage to come into contact with authorities is not evident. The victim might be discouraged to cooperate due to the fear of trafficker, fear of authorities, being

transmitted to the home country etc.. Issues regarding social security for victims who do not want to become formally registered might also be a concern.

Success factors of a central coordinating unit

- A positive day-to-day synergy between practical level and coordinating level.
- A holistic approach and operational working method.
- Cooperation with different authorities. For example, joining inspection authorities during inspections has proven a very effective way of identifying victims.
- A mandate and leverage to address obstacles with authoritative bodies.
- Information sharing in general between different authorities and NGOs.
- Identification and preventive work.
- Trust-building. The victims in Denmark are not obliged to report the crime to the police. It is particularly important to inform the victim about the process and the role of the referral mechanism when the referral mechanism is an authority.
- A clear division of responsibilities between different authorities.
- Formal identification of victims.

Suggestions for Nordic cooperation:

- A Nordic support system for information sharing on THB related issues would be valuable.
- A network for national coordinating functions in different countries would be valuable.
- It is important to bear in mind the contextual and political differences in the Nordic countries, which will inevitably affect the work against THB.

1.3.6 Norway: Laura's House: a shelter providing comprehensive support for victims of human trafficking

Speaker: Shelter Manager Eva Kristin Aune, Church City Mission Oslo

Moderator: Senior Specialist Minna Viuhko, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland

Rapporteur: Senior Officer Anni Valovirta, Office of the NonDiscrimination Ombudsman, Finland

In Norway, NGO's play a big part in assisting victims of human trafficking. Laura's House is the Church City Mission's shelter for victims and their children, it has existed since 2009 and is the first of its kind in Norway. The shelter is fully financed by the Ministry of Justice and Public security. Laura's house offers safe apartments and is staffed with social workers 24/7. Victims are referred to Laura's house from ROSA, an NGO with a nationwide responsibility for support and housing regardless of permit, or Human Trafficking Support Oslo (Municipal service). Laura's house has been successful in stabilizing the residents' situations.

Laura's house is specialized in helping the victims with complicated situations and it has been successful in stabilizing the residents' situations. Help with low threshold needs to be available – Laura's house is an example of a specialized unit with a higher threshold, where victims' needs can be addressed in very intense and holistic way.

Laura's house has a strong focus on physical and mental health, especially psychosomatic challenges, and work on stabilizing symptoms of trauma. The professionals seek to meet the residents on their terms and individual needs. Another focus area are the different rights and obligations that residents must relate to as identified victims of human trafficking in Norway. Laura's house provides support and hands-on assistance throughout all of these processes. Work is process-oriented with the goal of maximizing the resident's ability to control their own life situation.

Residence time is very individual and can extend over years. The residents can stay in Laura's house even when their immigration status changes. For example, if a person has had a reflection period and is afterwards in the asylum process, the person can stay in Laura's house. This has been a good practice in stabilizing victims' lives.

The shelter has room for nine individuals, plus their children. The residents have all been women, but it would be accessible for men as well. Norway has a specialized unit to host male victims, and this has led to gender-specialized shelters in practice.

Success factors of a support shelter

- In Laura's house, victims with the most complicated situations can stay a long time in a specialized unit that meets their basic needs and helps them throughout the other processes, such as the asylum process or criminal proceedings.
- The professionals seek to meet the residents on their terms and individual needs.
- Work is process-oriented with the goal of maximizing the resident's ability to control their own life situation.

Recommendations for the Nordic anti-trafficking response

- Adequate and continuous funding for NGOs was seen as a good practice since NGOs play an important role in every Nordic country in sheltering the victims. The states fund partly or all of the NGO's work.
- A National Referral Mechanism should be established in countries where it does not exist yet. National Referral Mechanisms clarify the role of the shelters in the victim assistance system. They bring structures to assistance and make it more predictable.
- Sharing information on shelters and NRMs in other Nordic countries is important.
- Research on shelters and their functioning would be fruitful. Victim assistance and shelters are organized in many ways in Nordic countries and comparative studies would be helpful to learn from each other.
- A long reflection period for the victim to decide on cooperation in the criminal process would be a good practice that focuses on answering the victims' needs. Victims need time to stabilize their situation and recover from trauma. The durations of allowed stay in shelters and lengths of reflection period vary in the Nordic countries. For example, Iceland already has a long reflection period of nine months.

1.4 Part III – Conclusions

Future and next steps of closer Nordic cooperation on prevention and combatting of trafficking in human beings

Venla Roth, Government Anti-Trafficking Coordinator of Finland

Roth drew conclusions from the seminar. She stressed the need for international cooperation on a practical level. In Nordic countries, the similarities of society structures create a certain common ground where experiences can easily be shared and possibly applied to use in other countries.

Roth stressed the need for adaptability and preparedness to address the constantly evolving and changing criminal patterns and trends. She emphasised that new efforts are needed to address increasing exploitation online and other emerging trends in the field of human trafficking.

Roth suggested that a formal structure for the Nordic anti-trafficking cooperation should be established in the framework of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Stable structures should support actors in the field.

Roth concluded by pointing at the effectiveness of joint efforts in the anti-trafficking work and wishing that a supportive atmosphere of co-working would be cherished when taking further steps to enhance Nordic cooperation.

2 Side event summaries

2.1 Meeting of Nordic human trafficking crime inspectors

The national investigation team focusing on the detection and investigation of human trafficking offences in Helsinki Police Department organized a meeting for Nordic human trafficking crime inspectors at Pasila Police Station on 17 November 2021.

Representatives of the police from all Nordic countries and Estonia were invited to the meeting. 21 participants attended altogether, including all invited parties. Most of the participants represented operative actors, investigation leaders and police prosecutors.

Themes of the meeting

All participants presented the established investigation procedures and anti-trafficking measures taken in their countries. All participant countries have both centralized and regional functions. The structures are different in all countries. For example, the Finnish model consists of an operative investigation team that supports the national expert network, whereas in Norway, the expert network is responsible for operative functions and the national function takes care of analysis and intelligence. The strengths of different forms of operation were discussed and suggestions for further development were shared.

In the second part, the participating countries presented topical and cross-border phenomena related to trafficking offences. Presentations provided information about on-going operations and current forms of committing trafficking crimes. Ways to collect criminal proceeds and transfer them to the countries of origin were also presented. Two countries told about the investigations of trafficking offences committed by the same criminal group that operated in both countries. These countries had used information shared from each other's investigations in their own investigations.

The last part consisted of exercises based on real cases. The participants were divided into groups where participating countries were represented as broadly as possible. While recapping the results of the exercises, participants discussed the similarities and differences in the countries' perceptions of different forms of trafficking in human beings. The processes of preliminary planning of investigation in different countries were also compared.

Outcome

The meeting was highly successful. A broad understanding of the Nordic dimensions of the phenomenon, the structures of trafficking crime prevention and possibilities for cooperation was achieved. Following the discussions during the meeting, it was decided that the possibility to establish a Nordic police expert group would be explored. The network would support Nordic police cooperation in terms of networking and information sharing as well as in operational activities. Information about present phenomena and operations could be shared quickly and precisely among operative actors. The participants appointed a working group that will look into the opportunity to establish such a network in 2022.

Next steps for Nordic cooperation

- A working group was appointed that will explore the possibility to establish a Nordic police expert group in 2022.
- The police expert group would support Nordic police cooperation in terms of networking and information sharing as well as in operational activities.

2.2 The Nordic countries as helpers for victims of human trafficking – challenges and successes

Finland's National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking organized a workshop for Nordic experts to discuss assistance for victims of human trafficking in the Nordic countries on 17 November 2021. At the same time, this event celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Finnish Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking.

In the workshop, experts from all the Nordic countries discussed what works and what could be better in victim assistance in Nordic countries. The workshop focused in particular on victims in especially vulnerable position. Thirty-four participants attended.

The workshop revealed that the challenge in every country often is the identification and this is especially the case in the most challenging cases of THB – for example begging, forced criminality, cases where the victim has some kind of disabilities or for example substance abuse. Different authorities and actors often or mainly look at the situation of an individual person from their own professional point of view and because of this, the overall

picture may be missing. The victim may for example receive drug treatment but at the same time may not be seen as victim of THB and because of that, does not receive any support, advice or assistance for their overall situation.

If a person is identified, we still do have systems and services in place in Nordic countries to effectively help the victim. There is information and competence available in our countries on THB and on victim assistance but the problem often is that you already have to have some knowledge and awareness of the issue in order to seek and find more information.

The workshop also concluded that there are regional differences in access to help in every country. A victim may quite commonly have better chance to be identified as a victim of THB and to receive appropriate assistance for example in the capital region than in other parts of the countries. The question is, how to train authorities around the country so that they are aware of the phenomenon and of the rights and the needs that victims have. The Nordic countries could possibly benefit from sharing their experiences on how to train professionals as effectively as possible and from sharing their experiences on the structures to assist victims of trafficking.

The workshop discussion raised the issue of the security of stay for the victims. Is the reflection period given to a potential victim or is it possible to receive a reflection period only when the victim already is actually identified as a victim of trafficking? There seems to be differences between the Nordic countries and thus this could be a potential area of knowledge sharing and sharing of experiences on how issuing the reflection period is arranged and what are the results of these different models.

The experts also noted that there often is quite or very high threshold to issue a residence permit for a victim of THB and the permit is often or strictly connected to the criminal process. This may result as a low motivation for the victims to tell their story and to be identified and it may also sometimes raise a question what is the point in identifying.

The experts commonly agreed that that we need more capacity building in our countries on exploitation in criminal activities and on non-punishment principle. Possibilities to share information, knowledge and experiences were seen. The Nordic countries could learn together. A wish was already expressed to organize a Nordic seminar around these topics.

Suggestions for Nordic cooperation

- It would be beneficial to share information and experiences, for example, on how to train professionals effectively and on the structures of victim assistance.
- Capacity building on exploitation in criminal activities and on non-punishment principle is needed.
- It could be fruitful to compare the different ways to organize the security of stay for the victims in the Nordic countries. Is the reflection period given to a potential victim or is it possible to receive a reflection period only when the victim already is actually identified as a victim of trafficking?

3 Interviews of experts from Nordic countries

3.1 Denmark

Mari Børnick-Sørhaug, Social welfare consultant, Danish Centre against Human Trafficking
Matilde Skov Danstrøm, Academic Officer, Danish Centre against Human Trafficking

The current tendencies and measures in the field of trafficking in human beings in Denmark, including the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, have recently been mapped in the annual report of the Danish Centre against Human Trafficking for 2020.¹ The report draws attention to the rise of new forms of criminality especially online and the increased risk to be recruited into trafficking for those in particularly vulnerable positions.

The experts from the Danish Centre against Human Trafficking mentioned that the low number of prosecutions is a common challenge that the Danish Government is seeking to address in the new action plan against human trafficking next year. Continuous efforts are needed to build the cases in the field of trafficking crimes.

The experts mentioned as some of the best practices in Denmark, the coordinating function that the Danish Centre against Human Trafficking has and the Danish approach developed to better identify and support victims of trafficking for criminal actions. Both practices were presented at the seminar.

Cooperation to support the operational actors in the field needed

The experts called for enhancing Nordic cooperation that actually benefits the operational actors in the field, including both authorities and the civil society. Modes of cooperation should aim at providing practical support. More profound, practical content for cooperation is needed beyond general level discussions and mere comparing of different formal mandates.

¹ Menneskehandel i Danmark 2020. Årsrapport. <https://socialstyrelsen.dk/udgivelser/menneskehandel-i-danmark-arsrapport-2020>

The similar profiles of the Nordic countries as primarily receiving countries and in many ways similar society structures enable a hands-on approach to the cooperation aiming at practical benefits.

As useful modes of cooperation, the experts suggested sharing data and information on phenomena as well as establishing contact networks.

Sharing of information is necessary to keep each other up-to-date regarding tendencies and patterns that often are very similar in the Nordic countries. Even same persons move in the Nordic area both when it comes to victims and perpetrators. A broad understanding of trends will help actors in different sectors to identify similar phenomena their countries. Learning from specific cases in other countries is essential.

Establishing contact networks is very important to facilitate sharing of information and lower the threshold to consult colleagues abroad. Because of the different organizational set-ups it is not always clear who to contact. Currently, there is no structured cooperation network but relations are based on individual, informal contacts. Coordination is needed to maintain accurate contact lists. Experts recalled that international meetings and seminars are also important in enlarging contact networks and getting informed of points of contact in different countries.

Experts mentioned combating trafficking online as one possible theme for Nordic cooperation and recalled that private online actors should be taken into account when planning the response to online abuse.

Cooperation structures have to adapt to changing challenges

Experts stressed that international cooperation is definitely needed to combat trafficking in human beings. Being a dynamic phenomenon, our response to THB should be flexible enough to adapt to new forms of trafficking. This adaptability should be taken into account also in the Nordic cooperation efforts.

The functionality of cooperation structures in relation to its objectives should be regularly evaluated. Short-term and long-term objectives could be set to direct Nordic cooperation towards desirable goals such as continuous sharing of information and supporting the operative actors in the field.

Only clear and functional cooperation structures that add value to the work that is already being done in Nordic countries, should be established. Unnecessary administrative fora should be avoided. The experts envisaged that national anti-trafficking coordinators could

have a focal role in collecting and sharing data. Cooperation among operative actors would also be essential.

Time and resources are needed to maintain Nordic cooperation structures. Experts considered possible funding by the Nordic Council of Ministers for pilot projects very useful. For example, when it comes to combating trafficking online, a possible pilot project could aim at building technical infrastructure and evaluating useful tools that could also work in the use of the private sector.

The experts recalled the importance of having the support a political level for the Nordic anti-trafficking efforts.

Recommendations for Nordic cooperation

- Cross-border cooperation is needed to combat human trafficking. Cooperation structures should be flexible enough to target the changing patterns and phenomena in trafficking crimes.
- Nordic cooperation should benefit the operational actors in the field, including both authorities and the civil society.
- Sharing of information is necessary to keep each other up-to-date regarding tendencies and patterns that often are very similar in the Nordic countries. A broad understanding of trends will help actors in different sectors to identify similar phenomena their countries. Learning from specific cases in other countries is essential.
- Establishing contact networks is very important to facilitate sharing of information and lower the threshold to consult colleagues abroad.
- Funding by the Nordic Council of Ministers for pilot projects would be very useful. For example, a Nordic pilot project combating trafficking online would be useful to discover technical infrastructure that could be employed in online anti-trafficking efforts.
- High-level political support from the Nordic Council of Ministers is extremely important for the Nordic anti-trafficking efforts.

3.2 Iceland

Hildur Sunna Pálmadóttir, Legal advisor, Ministry of Justice

Alda Hrönn Jóhannsdóttir, Police Prosecutor, Suðurnes police

As a best practice in Iceland, the experts referred to the creation of the new action plan against trafficking in human beings and the political, administrative and operative efforts to implement it. This progress was also presented at the seminar. The experts underlined the importance of a coordinating function at the Ministry of Justice in overseeing and managing the implementation of the actions on different operative levels. Likewise, in a Nordic context, cooperation is needed on both the administrative, coordinating level and the operative, practical level to achieve concrete results.

The current challenges in the anti-trafficking work in Iceland are related to finalising the actions of the Action Plan at all stages of the identification, investigation, prosecution and protection processes. Training and guidance for professionals are crucially important to make the pursued practices possible. Professionals in different fields are actively taking part in training sessions. Guidance lists are under preparation and guidance lists from other Nordic countries' have also been looked into in this process. More cases in human trafficking are needed to increase practical experience.

Experts further identified a need to formally establish a task force on human trafficking within the police and the prosecution in Iceland to have clear responsible actors in the investigation process.

The experts considered tighter Nordic cooperation highly beneficial for the national implementation process of the Action Plan.

Working seminars and operational networks to share information efficiently

The experts considered Nordic cooperation very important for sharing information about phenomena and trends as well as discussing cases and the practices used in the criminal proceedings and protection processes in each country. They also wished for enhancing and formalising contact networks among operational actors, especially by formalising the task force for law enforcement officials.

The experts highlighted the value of international seminars for learning about the phenomena and the best practices used in different countries to combat trafficking. Learning in international seminars by sharing and assessing cases and practices is useful for different actors in Iceland. Online meetings have provided more occasions

to participate. Also physical seminars are important to get better acquainted with the networks personally.

Training seminars with specific content for different operational actors should be organized to provide practical support for the work in the field. It is also important that different actors have a wide knowledge of different aspects of anti-trafficking work in order to have sufficient preparedness to both report about suspicions of crime and refer the victims to the assistance system.

Cooperation should be formalized on both administrative and operational levels

Among Nordic countries, formalized cooperation is needed on both administrative and operational levels and the Nordic Council of Ministers has an essential role in supporting these cooperation structures.

The experts drew attention to the importance of high level political support by the Nordic Council of Ministers. It is important to include anti-trafficking response on the agenda of the Nordic Council of Ministers, which would drive the Nordic countries to take measures to enhance the anti-trafficking work in the Nordic countries. High-level authority would be especially important in motivating the presidencies to include anti-trafficking response in their presidency agendas.

The Nordic Council of Minister's support for the countries in sharing experiences and information on a more practical level is also essential. The Nordic Council of Ministers could ideally hold coordinating functions assisting in sharing of information and overseeing that meetings are held. Funding would be highly beneficial to enable participation in the seminars which function as a vital educational platform. In addition, the coordinating function at the Nordic Council of Ministers could regularly compile and distribute information about recent developments in the Nordic countries and collect the Nordic countries' contributions to such a report.

The experts saw that the presidencies could also have a coordinating role in planning and calling the Nordic meetings. This would motivate the countries to strive for development, present new findings, analyse the cases and learn from successes and flaws together.

Administrative cooperation is necessary to manage funding and push forward and promote the cooperation measures on the operational level. Coordinating contact points are also needed within operational actors to enhance their ownership and efficiency of the cooperation measures.

On the operational level, a task force for law enforcement officials should be formally established. The existing cooperation among police should be formalized to have the institutional support from the Nordic Council of Ministers and ensure regular sharing of information. With a long-term decision, the task force could be set for five years, for example, including a rotating lead by each Nordic country during the presidency.

Experts considered most useful to formalize cooperation structures first on the administrative level and among operational law enforcement after which cooperation structures for other fields should also be established.

Recommendations for Nordic cooperation

- Formalized Nordic anti-trafficking cooperation is needed on both administrative and operational levels. The role of the Nordic Council of Ministers is essential in supporting these cooperation structures.
- It is important to include anti-trafficking response on the agenda of the Nordic Council of Ministers, which would drive the Nordic countries to take measures to enhance the anti-trafficking work in the Nordic countries.
- The Nordic Council of Ministers could ideally hold coordinating functions assisting in sharing of information and overseeing that meetings are held.
- The rotating presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers could also have a coordinating role in planning and calling the Nordic meetings. This would motivate the countries to strive for development, present new findings, analyse cases and learn from successes and flaws together.
- Administrative cooperation is necessary to manage funding and push forward cooperation measures on the operational level. Coordinating contact points are also needed within operational actors to enhance their ownership and efficiency of the cooperation measures.
- On the operational level, a task force for law enforcement officials should be formally established to assure the institutional support from the Nordic Council of Ministers and facilitate regular sharing of information.

3.3 Norway

Jan Austad, Specialist director, Ministry of Justice

Julie Platou Kvammen, Senior adviser, National Police Directorate, KOM

Ingrid Weider Lothe, Senior adviser, National Police Directorate, KOM

Kenneth Henriksen, Police superintendent, The National Police Competence Group against Trafficking in Human Beings

Emerging challenges should be addressed together

The current challenges in and recommendations for the anti-trafficking work in Norway are mapped in the annual reports of the Coordinating Unit for Victims of Human Trafficking (KOM). KOM leads the cross-sectoral anti-trafficking coordination in Norway. It is administratively placed under the auspices of the National Police Directorate (POD) and it has a separate mandate from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (JD).

In the report for 2020², emerging challenges have been identified particularly in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. Detection of trafficking offences and identification of victims have become more difficult as outreach measures have been decreased due to pandemic restriction measures. Assistance measures have also been affected and become slower in some cases. Importance of the reachability of online information measures is growing.

The pandemic has made more vulnerable those who already found themselves in vulnerable situations before. The report points to the increased demand for online abuse and the need to address the situation of children whose vulnerability has increased due to isolation and increased exposure to the internet during the pandemic. The pandemic probably has an effect on increased demand for sexual exploitation in general and labour exploitation as well.

As for successful practices in Norway, the experts referred to the National Police Competence Group and the support shelter Laura's House that were presented at the seminar. The KOM's administrative structure is also considered successful due to its close connections with the police which allow for constructive relations with the criminal justice system. KOM's reports and seminars organized by KOM have been well received in Norway.

² Rapport fra Koordineringsenheten for ofre for menneskehandel 2020, <https://www.politiet.no/globalassets/03-rad-og-forebygging/menneskehandel/kom-tilstandsrapport-2020.pdf>

The experts from Norway saw a compelling need to enhance Nordic anti-trafficking cooperation to address emerging problems together in a specialized way. The cooperation structure should be clear and understandable for all.

The Nordic countries have a similar profile being destination countries and having similar society structures which is a great common foundation for fruitful cooperation. The five Nordic states could focus on questions specific in the Nordic context by solving the parallel challenges and developing practical ways of working together.

Experts referred the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking as a legal foundation for the suggested cooperation structure. Article 32 of the Convention requires relevant regional cooperation structures and states the purposes of preventing and combatting trafficking, protecting and providing assistance to victims and investigations and proceedings concerning criminal offences.

A formalized cooperation based on the national coordinators and a strong secretariat

The experts called for formalizing Nordic cooperation by creating a stable, clear and functional coordination structure. Cooperation was suggested to build on a strong secretariat at the Nordic Council of Ministers and bring together the coordinating units of each Nordic country.

The coordination structure would primarily focus on the network of national anti-trafficking coordinating bodies. The coordinators would act as central focus points in each state. Their role would include planning the substance of the cooperation by choosing project themes and stakeholders that would benefit from participating in the projects. The relevant topics to cooperate on would thus be chosen in a specialized and focused way, which is necessary to address the emerging problems in a meaningful, goal-oriented way.

Central coordination is necessary to make sure that cooperation is established on a high competence level serving the relevant needs of professionals. Facilitating cooperation among experts in the field will make progress possible. To achieve results, a more ambitious approach and agenda for the Nordic anti-trafficking cooperation must be developed.

Central coordination would function as a link between the administrative and operative level actors. Through central coordination, the needs of different stakeholders including agencies and NGOs could be taken into account in a fair manner, which also addresses the gap between authorities and civil society.

Experts saw as a crucial deficiency that there currently is no formal cooperation between the national coordinating bodies. Currently, Nordic cooperation is largely based on informal networks and personal relations and the vast benefit of a formalized approach is missing.

By discussing also the different ways how coordination functions in Nordic countries have been organized, the countries could identify possible benefits of bringing the coordination structures closer to each other.

The coordinators' strong role in substance matters would also facilitate the work of the secretariat of the NCM.

A strong secretariat is needed to ensure the continuity and focus of the cooperation. Ideally, the secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers would have dedicated personnel to assist the national coordinators' network and ensure that planned forms of cooperation are actually carried out by the members. Dedicated resources from the NCM would thus be necessary both to uphold the coordination structure including dedicated personnel at the secretariat and to establish concrete projects and measures. The experts referred to the strong secretariat of the CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings as an example.

The secretariat should have a clear steering role instead of a rotating lead by NCM presidencies. A rotating lead risks the continuity of the efforts while changing national interests might easily distract the focus.

Both areas of victim assistance and enforcement of criminal liability should be covered

The suggested cooperation structure should cover the entire field of anti-trafficking questions, both victim assistance and the criminal justice sector.

The cooperation network could organize for example one or more yearly workshops on the topical themes set by the national coordinators. Combining both physical and online meetings would be ideal. To carry out the meetings, financing for travelling would be necessary, as many stakeholders do not have dedicated financing for attending international meetings. Therefore, it would be of utmost importance that the NCM's secretariat could control project funding including funding for travels.

Experts recommended also conducting Nordic research comparing countries' practices and court cases, for example. Results of the research could emerge as concrete suggestions as the coordinators' network could initiate projects taking into account the studies. Research would ideally function alongside the coordinators' network and parallel funding for both would be needed.

As an example of a specific operational actor, experts described how the needs of the police could be answered. Operational cross-border police cooperation should be enhanced. Support is needed to make sure that all police units apply the agreement on Nordic police cooperation that binds them. For instance, financial support could enable establishing joint investigation teams, following the example of Europol JITs. Experts also referred to the intelligence systems as one possible subject of police cooperation.

Experts recalled the importance of keeping anti-trafficking questions high on the political agenda. Anti-trafficking measures are a sensitive political field. Therefore, it would be highly beneficial to include anti-trafficking work in the discussions of the Nordic Ministers to pave the way for a strategic approach and common solutions and practices. Experts reminded that the last meeting of Nordic Ministers of Justice in June 2021 revealed the need to clarify the approach to Nordic anti-trafficking cooperation. Experts pointed out that members of the Nordic Council have also shown interest in anti-trafficking issues.

Recommendations for Nordic cooperation

- Formalized, clear and stable cooperation structure building on the national coordinators' network and a strong secretariat at the NCM is needed.
- A strong secretariat at the NCM is needed to ensure the stability and continuity of cooperation, to appoint dedicated personnel at the secretariat and to provide dedicated funding for the cooperation network and projects.
- The national coordinators as central focus points enable a centralised, specialised and focused approach that takes into account the needs of all stakeholders. The coordinators should choose relevant topics to cooperate on, focusing on specialized, goal-oriented cooperation that benefits operational actors. The coordinators would name relevant stakeholders to attend each common project, taking into account both authorities and the civil society.
- Within the police side, support is needed to ensure that the agreement on Nordic police cooperation is applied by all police units. With financial support, the establishment of joint investigation teams could be considered.
- Funding for common research projects would provide useful impetus for the Nordic cooperation.
- Including anti-trafficking work in the discussions of the Nordic Ministers would pave the way for a strategic approach and common solutions and practices.

3.4 Sweden

Anna Ekstedt, Ambassador-at-large for Combating Trafficking in Persons

Expertise on combating different forms of exploitation can be shared

Ekstedt emphasized the need to address the demand in anti-trafficking efforts and described the work against demand done in Sweden as one of the country's best practices against THB. She presented the Swedish approach to trafficking for sexual exploitation as a tangible example of how the demand can be addressed in legislation.

In Sweden, the exploitation in prostitution is considered a form of violence against women. This approach has also provided an efficient tool in working against trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Under the new legislation in force since 2018, a person who buys sexual services from a trafficked person can be prosecuted for rape in certain situations.

The new legislation has had a positive effect on the work against the demand both among the population and the authorities. Over 70 % of the population in Sweden support the new legislation. The police and social workers have reported that the new law is an important tool in identifying victims, providing assistance to victims and working with trafficking cases. The Swedish model is being applied for use also in other Nordic countries and other countries. Sweden supports and appreciates that the model developed in Sweden is becoming more and more widespread as a common equality model to combat trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

As another best practice, Ekstedt mentioned the National Referral Mechanism in Sweden, in particular, the role of regional coordinators ensuring cooperation between law enforcement on one hand and social services and assistance providers on the other.

Current challenges and recommendations for the anti-trafficking work in Sweden have recently been mapped in a report published by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency on prostitution and trafficking in human beings in Sweden.³

According to the report, exploitation online as well as the recruitment and abuse of young people online have increased. Challenges remain also in the proficiency of social and

3 PROSTITUTION OCH MÄNNISKOHANDEL. Slutredovisning av uppdrag att stärka arbetet mot att barn och unga respektive vuxna utnyttjas i prostitution och människohandel, samt kartlägga omfattningen av prostitution och människohandel, https://www.jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se/files/2021/09/Prostitution-och-manniskohandel-2021-23_2.pdf

health care professionals and legal professionals in victim identification and assistance. Specialized assistance is not equally available between different geographic areas. Sweden has addressed challenges by developing an online education platform. The child perspective and assistance of children and young persons also need to be further enhanced.

Ekstedt mentioned combating of labour exploitation as one challenge where Sweden would profit from learning from other Nordic countries. Sweden has recently launched a delegation to fight against work-related crime which is tasked with increasing knowledge about the issue while supporting the authorities working to stop it.

Cooperation against the demand and to address online abuse is necessary

Ekstedt emphasized that the themes of cooperation have to be discussed and assessed in the Nordic countries to find out what the countries see as the biggest challenges and what kind of cooperation is considered beneficial. Actors in the field should be interviewed to find out their concrete needs. Only such cooperation models that benefit the field in practice and provide concrete support should be established. New administrative fora with superficial effects is to be avoided.

Ekstedt saw that similarities in trends and developments regarding trafficking in human beings in Nordic countries entail many possibilities for cooperation on different levels. It is important to exchange information about trends but there are also possibilities for cooperation on strategic and operative levels depending on the countries' needs and wishes. The countries can discuss and learn from each other about what methods are used to combat different forms of trafficking and what kind of organizational structures are in place.

Ekstedt suggested that Nordic countries could work together to combat abuse online where countries lack knowledge and efficient tools. New methods have to be developed to identify victims online and establish criminal liability of the traffickers. Support and assistance to the victims need to be assured irrespective of the form in which trafficking has been committed.

Ekstedt emphasized that all anti-trafficking cooperation models need to include targeting the demand. The obligation to address the demand follows from the UN protocol against trafficking in persons that binds all Nordic countries. Ekstedt considered useful if all Nordic countries could assess different ways in which demand could be addressed, including legislation and other means. Here, countries could also learn from each other when it comes the best ways to address different forms of trafficking offences and targeting the demand for them.

The common work against the demand should be discussed against the background of strong equality agendas in the Nordic countries and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The common work in the Nordic countries and the NCM against the demand would accordingly contribute to implementing the equality agendas.

The Nordic cooperation structure should complement the existing networks

Envisaging the Nordic cooperation structure, Ekstedt underlined that Nordic cooperation should complement the already existing forms of international and EU cooperation. She stressed the need to take stock on of the work done in the contexts of the EU, the UN, the OSCE and especially the CBSS that is geographically closest to all the Nordics.

By finding out what kind of cooperation does not exist yet among the Nordics, the role of the Nordic network and the Nordic Council of Ministers in that network can be determined. The role of the NCM be to support such cooperation among the Nordics that complements already existing modes of cooperation. Ekstedt argued for a close cooperation between the Nordic Council of Ministers and the CBSS in anti-trafficking matters.

The Nordic countries should aim at addressing the gaps in their anti-trafficking response. Nordic cooperation should thus be based on an assessment of the flaws in the Nordic countries' response to THB and the ways in which Nordics could jointly address these flaws. It is important to bring together actors on different levels to exchange best practices and identify the flaws to address together. Cross-border cooperation and cross-sectoral cooperation are crucial since no country or area can build a sufficient response alone.

Ekstedt pointed to the possible role of national coordinators in the Nordic cooperation structure as a natural starting point. The coordinators could, for example, take stock of the cooperation methods already used by Nordics in the context of the CBSS and map out how these methods could be applied among the Nordic countries. Ekstedt also recalled the importance of good connections among national rapporteurs against THB.

As for the role of the NCM, Ekstedt underlined the importance of having a strategic support for the cooperation. She referred to the secretariat of the NCM as a contact point that can remarkably facilitate the sharing of information and building other forms of cooperation as well.

Recommendations for Nordic cooperation

- Nordic cooperation models should provide concrete benefit for the actors in the field and address the existing flaws in the countries' response to THB. Actors in the field should be interviewed to find out their concrete needs and the deficiencies that can be addressed through Nordic cooperation.
- Nordic cooperation models should complement the already existing forms of international and EU cooperation.
- There are possibilities for cooperation on different levels, such as strategic and operative, depending on the needs and wishes of the actors involved in the anti-trafficking efforts in each country.
- The Secretariat of the NCM would be an important contact point at the NCM. The involvement of the NCM in the Nordic cooperation is necessary to have a strategic support.
- Nordic countries can learn from each others' experiences in combating different forms of THB. Sweden has a long experience of working against the demand for trafficking for sexual exploitation. On the other hand, it needs to learn about detecting labour exploitation.
- Targeting the demand should be included in all models of Nordic cooperation.
- Nordic countries could work together to combat abuse online where countries currently lack knowledge and efficient tools.

3.5 Finland

Venla Roth, Government Anti-Trafficking Coordinator

Pekka Hätönen, Detective Chief Inspector, Helsinki Police Department

Katri Lyijynen, Deputy Director of Joutseno Reception Centre/National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking

Experts from Finland considered cooperation among Nordic countries highly important. By working together and learning from each other, different actors could work more efficiently and also national challenges in the anti-trafficking work could be addressed.

In the Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2021-2023, numerous challenges in the Finnish anti-trafficking response were identified regarding uncovering,

establishment of criminal liability and ensuring that the victims' right to assistance is realized. There are deficiencies in legislation, administrative practices and knowledge of professionals.⁴

Experts underlined the need for cooperation both on the administrative level between national coordinators that can support all actors in the field as well as directly between the operative actors.

Nordic cooperation can provide a remarkable added value for the national actors if cooperation is based on relevant, profound themes and contents of the meeting are carefully planned. Keeping up stable cooperation on relevant themes requires funding from and a strong involvement of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Nordic countries are a fruitful reference group to each other having a similar profile as destination countries and having in many ways similar society structures. It is necessary to share information of anti-trafficking responses in Nordic countries to increase mutual understanding and also to enhance a human rights oriented approach in the anti-trafficking work.

The experts recalled that discussions on THB entail sensitive political questions. On the Nordic forum, different actors could find alliances and networks in these debates. As an example of different interpretations of THB as a phenomenon and the means by which it should be addressed, the experts referred to the discussion on ethicality of victim identification that is present in a Finnish legislative project on victim assistance.

Need for cooperation on more profound and relevant themes

Experts underlined that research provides an important foundation for functional and effective anti-trafficking measures and recommended financing and conducting Nordic research projects. A lack of research is likely to undermine our awareness and understanding of the current challenges. For example, in Finland, there is a lack of legal-dogmatic research on criminal provisions on human trafficking and their application. Other suggested research topics included proving the crime in criminal proceedings, claims for compensation for victims as well as forensic psychiatric examinations of adults.

4 Finland fights human trafficking. Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings (2021) https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/163326/OM_2021_24_ML.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

The planning of fruitful agendas of international meetings is important. Focused agendas should be prepared by dedicated coordinating bodies. The themes discussed should go beyond general comparisons between differences of national structures to more profound and detailed questions on what concrete ways of working have produced good results. In the field of victim assistance for instance, such pertinent questions could include models of psychological support, psychiatric care and psychotherapeutic support.

Only by creating relevant and specialized agendas for cooperation, the actual needs of different actors can be addressed. Instead of single isolated meetings, more specified plans are needed to answer the needs of Nordic actors. A stable cooperation structure is essential to keep a constant contact with operative actors, hear their needs and answer them.

Experts identified numerous areas where learning together with other Nordic countries would be extremely beneficial.

Firstly, addressing the increasing abuse online is of utmost importance. Considerable added value would be gained if the countries focused efforts on it together. In Finland, current legislation only gives limited competences to the authorities online and further tools would be needed. Secondly, Finland needs to learn how to better address the demand. Currently, there is a lack of functioning tools to extend liability to the demand side in Finland. Experts also saw a need to develop more systematic education structures to keep different actors up-to-date.

In the field of police cooperation, important areas of cooperation are the use of open source intelligence as well as faster operative cooperation.

In the field of victim assistance, the need to address repeat victimization was highlighted. In this context, sharing of information of phenomena, methods of assistance and competences of authorities would be of utmost importance. Furthermore, outreach and communication methods should be updated to cover the diverse information channels also online.

The strength of anti-trafficking practices in Finland is the seamless cooperation between different authorities that was also shared as a best practice at the seminar. Likewise, relations between the authorities and the civil society have been strengthened during the last years. On the other hand, cooperation with municipal social services that are responsible for victim assistance in certain cases, should be enhanced and Finland could learn from other Nordic countries in this matter.

Stable cooperation structures on both administrative and operative levels necessary

Experts considered necessary to enhance the role of the Nordic Council of Ministers in the Nordic cooperation structure. Both a network of coordinators and cooperation on operative levels should be supported by a stable structure and funding from the NCM. A responsible steering party within the NCM should be appointed.

All levels are needed to support the anti-trafficking work. The NCM has the authority to give a binding character to the cooperation model that should be built on the countries' views on the needs for cooperation. The strong involvement of both the countries views and the NCM's authority is essential to bind and motivate the countries to the common work.

The NCM's financial support is of utmost importance in establishing stable coordination structures. Only stable structures will enable planning and realising a fruitful cooperation agenda and continuous Nordic meetings and low-threshold contact networks. Even ad hoc contacts require a stable coordination structure in the background. Without a stable structure, there is a high risk that cooperation dissolves and contacts with relevant corresponding actors in other countries are lost.

Dedicated personnel responsible for the budget control and facilitating the countries' network at the NCM is necessary. The involvement of the NCM would accordingly entail a reporting duty by the countries to the NCM which would also prompt countries to carry out concrete work.

On the administrative level, national anti-trafficking coordinators would be in charge of planning a cooperation agenda taking into account the national discussions and supporting the operative actors. Projects could include seminars, meetings or other projects according to the needs in the field. Online meetings would provide flexibility in terms of schedule and finances in addition to physical meetings.

On the operative level, actors would also benefit from direct contact networks. On the law enforcement side, faster operative cooperation and legal consultation in concrete cases with cross-border implications is needed. The possibility to conduct labour inspections in different countries could be an interesting issue to look into as well.

Recommendations for Nordic cooperation

- Stable Nordic cooperation structures are needed on both administrative and operative levels in order to learn from each other, work together more efficiently and enhance a human rights oriented response to THB.
- The Nordic Council of Minister's support is needed to confirm the importance of the cooperation on a high political level, to finance the stable contact networks, projects and research and to appoint a responsible party for the coordination also at the NCM.
- National anti-trafficking coordinators could plan relevant agendas for cooperation in view of responding the needs of operative actors.
- Cooperation is needed especially to combat abuse online, address the demand, prevent repeat victimization and facilitate operative cooperation of law enforcement officials.
- Financing Nordic research projects would be useful to have a scientific background for concrete anti-trafficking measures.
- Profound and specialised agendas for cooperation are needed in order to serve the needs of operational actors and provide practical solutions to concrete challenges. Only stable structures with sufficient financing will enable planning and realising fruitful cooperation and regular Nordic meetings as well as upholding low-threshold contact networks.

4 Feedback survey of the seminar

An online feedback survey was conducted after the seminar among all participants who were present at the main seminar. The survey was anonymous but the participants were asked to indicate which actor they represent.

When asked “How important do you consider the goal to enhance Nordic anti-trafficking cooperation?” 97 % (31 respondents) out of the total of 32 respondents, considered enhancing Nordic anti-trafficking cooperation very important while 3 % (1 respondent) considered it moderately important.

In addition, the participants were asked the following open questions:

- “What kind of Nordic anti-trafficking cooperation would be fruitful in your opinion?”
- “Among which actors and on what questions is cooperation needed?”
- “What kind of Nordic assistance or cooperation would benefit your work?”

In their answers, representatives of both law enforcement and NGOs as well as government administration underlined the need to have formalized structures for dynamic, practice-oriented cooperation.

Joint consultation groups were suggested for the police on one hand and for the NGOs on the other. The national anti-trafficking coordinators should form one cooperation network. It was suggested that the secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers could administer the different coordination structures in a centralised way.

Useful working methods would be reviewing cases, exchanging information on trends, practices and legislation and developing new practices together. Cooperation could take place as task force meetings, seminars, study visits or online cooperation platforms. Learning and working together by sharing information and practices, studying phenomena, reviewing concrete cases and developing common ways of working would lead to a notable added value in the work against trafficking in human beings.

The need for an independent national rapporteur came out in several replies of the NGOs. Some NGOs suggested joint lobbying activities in the EU and the UN. Some NGOs drew attention to the need for funding to keep up their work. Some NGO representatives called for better involving survivors in developing anti-trafficking practices such as outreach work and counselling.

A representative of an international organization stressed that the support for victims themselves forms the core of a human-centred response to trafficking. The respondent called for a more coherent approach against trafficking from the Nordic countries, both in terms of preventing trafficking, information campaigns for the general public and in providing assistance to victims. The respondent also recommended Nordic countries to strengthen cooperation beyond the Nordic region, for example by considering the perspectives of countries of origin and what to do if a victim returns home.

The need for Nordic research was mentioned by different actors.

Recommendations for Nordic cooperation

- Enhancing Nordic cooperation is considered very important.
- Formalized structures for dynamic, practice-oriented cooperation are needed both on administrative and operational levels.
- Useful working methods would be reviewing cases, exchanging information on trends, practices and legislation and developing new practices together. Task forces for the law enforcement side and the NGO side were suggested.
- Nordic countries were encouraged to strive for a more coherent response to trafficking, keeping the support for victims themselves in the core of the human-centred response to trafficking.

5 Conclusions

Wide support for enhanced Nordic cooperation

At the seminar, at the side events and in the interviews with Nordic anti-trafficking experts, a concrete and acute need for tighter, formalized cooperation among Nordic countries in the work against trafficking in human beings became apparent.

The objectives of the work against trafficking in human beings are related to protecting and providing assistance to the victims, identifying human trafficking and establishing the criminal liability of the offenders. The Nordic countries need support in their efforts to achieve these goals, to build networks, exchange information and learn together and from each other. Cooperation to this end requires financing and supporting structures to make sharing of information and experiences possible.

Trafficking in human beings is a serious crime against sexual self-determination, bodily integrity and individual freedom. It is a serious violation of victims' human rights. Trafficking in human beings affects the society in many ways. It is often a cross-border crime and may be related to international organised crime operations. Human trafficking generates considerable proceeds of crime and offenders most often subject victims to exploitation for financial gain. Human trafficking undermines the competitiveness of law-abiding businesses and reduces tax revenues. The patterns of trafficking crimes may be complex and change fast which emphasizes the need for stable anti-trafficking cooperation across borders.

The project has shown that there are active and highly committed professionals in the Nordic countries both among authorities and the civil society who make valuable efforts to combat human trafficking. However, these experts need support for their work in order to make their efforts as efficient and successful as possible. Experts need to learn constantly about the new phenomena in the field and the best ways to address the emerging challenges. In this report, the suggestions, recommendations and wishes of experts from different fields regarding Nordic anti human trafficking cooperation have been highlighted. The necessary areas to cooperate on as well as useful structures and methods for cooperation have been covered.

As a result, a formal cooperation structure to promote and facilitate the cooperation among Nordic countries is useful. A coordination structure would bring together the national coordinating bodies of each Nordic country and function with the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Some countries have also rapporteurs, and they could be

invited to participate in the network, as well. The similarities among Nordic countries in terms of society structures and patterns and trends in human trafficking phenomena are considered a fruitful foundation for closer cooperation.

Support by the Nordic Council of Ministers for the work is essential to guarantee the continuity of cooperation. In a recent study⁵ conducted by the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, combatting cross-border crime was seen as the most important priority area for Nordic cooperation. By strengthening anti-human trafficking cooperation, the Nordic countries and the Nordic Council of Ministers could also answer the call of the Nordic population to take action to combat cross-border crime. To actively promote cross-border measures, it is recommendable to include combatting trafficking in human beings in the priorities or spheres of activity of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The suggested model would provide the structures that are necessary to make an exchange of information and experiences possible. A formal cooperation structure is needed to ensure continuing, concrete support for different actors working against human trafficking, in particular operational actors in the field. The ability of the central coordination structure to take into account the needs of different actors in the field is underlined. The project has shown that experts wish to learn and work together by sharing information and good practices, studying phenomena, reviewing concrete cases and developing common ways of working.

A permanent cooperation structure is seen necessary to enable durable ways of working and make concrete actions and results possible. At the same time, ability to address new challenges in a volatile playing field where new forms of trafficking in human beings emerge and the needs of those working against the crime and supporting victims change. Stability and adaptability should go hand in hand.

The cooperation structure needs to be clear and understandable for all. Any administrative fora that does not eventually aim at supporting the operational actors that support victims and enhance criminal liability, is to be avoided. In addition to the central coordination structure, expert groups among operational actors could be established.

Hearing the survivors of trafficking in human beings is central in all anti-trafficking efforts. At the seminar, a Nordic survivor advisory council was suggested to be established. The establishment of a survivor advisory board in the Nordic countries should be considered

5 Support and Disappointment: Attitudes towards Nordic co-operation. <https://pub.norden.org/nord2021-060/>

as one possible way to improve the systematic involvement of survivors in policy making processes.

The current efforts of the EU to implement the new EU strategy makes the activation of Nordic cooperation very timely. The EU's new strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings has been adopted in April 2021 and is now being implemented. The European Commission is calling for a more intense response to combat human trafficking. The Commission is evaluating the implementation of already existing EU rules on human trafficking and will consider new legislation based on the evaluation. An activation of cooperation also in the Nordic would be in line with the EU's efforts to strengthen the anti-human trafficking response. By creating a formalized structure for cooperation, the Nordic area would answer the EU's call for a stronger anti-trafficking response.

Nordic coordinating function for action against trafficking in human beings

A central coordination network should be established among the national coordinating bodies against human trafficking with a secretariat at the Nordic Council of Ministers. The relevant coordinating bodies in the Nordic countries are the Centre against Human Trafficking in Denmark, the Government Anti-Trafficking Coordinator in Finland, the coordinator against trafficking in human beings at the Ministry of Justice in Iceland, the Coordinating Unit for Victims of Human Trafficking (KOM) in Norway and the Gender Equality Agency in Sweden.

It is proposed that a network of national anti-trafficking coordinating bodies could be established as part of the Nordic co-operation on legislative affairs at the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Central coordination is necessary to make sure that cooperation is established on a high competence level serving the relevant needs of operational actors. The national coordinators would act as central focus points in each state and as a link between the administrative and operative level actors. They would take into account the needs of different stakeholders including authorities and NGOs in planning the methods and contents of cooperation.

Central coordination is necessary to ensure coherence as well as cross-sectoral and long-term perspectives for the cooperation. The coordinating function would plan such projects and ways of working that correspond to and answer the needs of operational actors. Coordination would enable tailoring specified programmes and activities that benefit experts in the field as much as possible. Only through central coordination, a more ambitious approach and agenda for the joint Nordic anti human trafficking action can be

developed. Central coordination is also needed to review the functionality of cooperation and report about its results to the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The coordinators' strong role in substance matters would also facilitate the work of the secretariat of the NCM.

Support by the Nordic Council of Ministers, including financial support, is crucial to create the necessary conditions for fruitful cooperation among the Member States. To build a stable structure, dedicated personnel could be appointed at the secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers

The rotating presidency of the NCM would involve a role in initiating and carrying out projects and other jointly planned actions under the supervision and with the support of the secretariat. The stable secretariat would primarily manage and facilitate the coordinators' network instead of the rotating presidency.

Operational level networks

Besides the central coordinating structure built on the national coordinating bodies and the secretariat, direct operational networks are necessary. The Nordic coordinating function would support and facilitate the work of the operational networks where necessary.

As for the police, the possibility to establish a Nordic police expert group on THB is already being explored by a working group that was appointed at the meeting of Nordic human trafficking crime inspectors. The expert group would support Nordic police cooperation in terms of networking and information sharing as well as in operational activities, starting from 2022.

At the side event 'The Nordic countries as helpers for victims of human trafficking - challenges and successes', sharing of information, knowledge and experiences among Nordic countries was seen useful. The Nordic countries could learn together, for example, on the structures of victim assistance and how to train professionals effectively. More capacity building is needed on exploitation in criminal activities and on non-punishment principle. A wish was expressed to organize a Nordic seminar around these topics.

It has also been suggested at the seminar, to set up a Nordic consultation group among the Nordic NGOs that work against human trafficking. The consultation group's functions could include sharing of information and best practices, for example.

Strategic and financial support is necessary

High level political support is vital for joint action against trafficking in human beings. Therefore, discussions on necessary measures against trafficking in human beings on a Minister level are extremely important. Decisions and recommendations on a Minister level pave the way for common solutions and practices and a strategic approach that encourages and requires Nordic countries to take action. It would be highly beneficial for cooperation to include anti-human trafficking action in the priorities or spheres of activity of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Dedicated resources from the NCM are necessary both to appoint dedicated personnel at the secretariat and to finance concrete projects and measures. Financial resources are extremely important to uphold a stable coordination structure and to make relevant actions aiming at supporting the victims and enhancing criminal liability possible.

Possible methods and areas of cooperation

The central coordination network would meet regularly to plan activities for the different stakeholders. The topics and methods of cooperation could be flexibly planned by the coordinators taking into account the current challenges and needs. Activities could be arranged on varying specific themes could be organized for different professional sectors.

Suggested activities include exchanging information on trends, cases, practices and legislation and developing new practices together. In addition, establishing contact networks is considered important to facilitate sharing of information and lower the threshold to consult colleagues abroad. Cooperation could take place as task force meetings, seminars, study visits or online cooperation platforms. Both physical and online meetings could be arranged. Financing for travelling would be highly beneficial, as many stakeholders do not have dedicated financing for attending international meetings.

The seminar showed that the Nordic countries have valuable expertise in different fields of anti-trafficking work and all Nordics can learn together. The seminar serves as an example of one functional method of learning by sharing and developing practices together.

At the seminar, experts from Iceland presented how a functional national action plan against trafficking in human beings was created and how it became a political priority. Best practices from Sweden included the National Referral Mechanism that promotes a coherent multisectoral approach in protecting the victims and the work Sweden has done for long against trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Experts from Norway presented the successes of establishing the National Police Competence Group that coordinates police efforts against human trafficking as well

as Laura's house which is a shelter providing comprehensive support for victims. Best practices from Denmark included the Danish Centre against Human Trafficking as a central coordinating unit and national referral mechanism as well as the work against trafficking for criminal activities that has been strongly addressed. Experts from Finland presented the independent National Rapporteur mechanism and the multisectoral approach to labour trafficking.

Combating trafficking online is suggested as one focus area for Nordic cooperation. Nordic countries lack knowledge and efficient tools to combat trafficking online. A major concern is how to prevent and stop online platforms used for THB purposes from operating. A possible pilot project could aim at building technical infrastructure and evaluating useful tools that could also work in the use of the private sector.

It is recommended to finance and conduct Nordic research projects parallel to the central coordination activities. Research provides an important foundation and impetus for functional and effective anti-trafficking measures. Results of studies could emerge as concrete suggestions through initiatives for concrete action by the coordinators' network. Research topics could cover comparisons and reviews of countries' practices and court cases.

To enable a fruitful international cooperation, the Nordic cooperation network could take stock of international cooperation that the Nordic countries already participate in. The Nordic network could consider enhancing together a coherent approach and improve their cooperation also with countries beyond the Nordic area and with international organizations.

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