



TOLERANT

Support Victims of Human Trafficking

TOLERANT: Transnational network for Employment integration of women victims of trafficking

Newsletter No2

June 2020

TOLERANT is a transnational network aiming to support the regular exchange of good practices, experiences and information related to ground work for integrating women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (VoT) in employment and for promoting their economic empowerment.

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During the last 3 months, the network members struggled to adapt to the new reality imposed by the COVID-19. Partners had to continue -providing their services through online platforms or via the telephone in order to support Victims of Trafficking. The pandemic and the subsequent lockdown implemented in most of the countries severely affected the protection and safety of Victims of Trafficking.

AIDRom hosted the mid-term meeting in Bucharest on the 16th-17th of January 2020, where network members had the chance to discuss about the Network and organize its next steps. The next meeting of the partners will be on the 25th and 26th of June 2020 during the second exchange workshop (online).

PROJECT PARTNERS



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► In Greece:

More specifically for Greece:

In Greece, KMOP – Social Action and Innovation Centre has started providing individual and gender-sensitive service support for the labour market integration of women identified as victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation and migrant women, who are at risk or are potential victims. The services are offered in Northern Greece in the area of Thessaloniki. During May and June, we had the chance to effectively address the needs of 10 women at risk of becoming Victims of Trafficking, offering them customised support to enhance their employability skills. Their countries of origin were Syria, Kuwait, Morocco, Georgia, Cameroon and Afghanistan.



Some news from the Greek context:

1) Stakeholders in the field of Trafficking continue to collaborate and build networks of cooperation. In a recent parliamentary discussion by the Special Standing Committee on Equality, Youth and Human Rights of the Greek parliament, the effects of the pandemic to the identification, prevention and protection systems related to trafficking were explored.

[Learn More](#)

2) Webinars in English about the laws concerning human trafficking were organised by the Center For European Constitutional Law during June.

[Learn More](#)

3) A live event was organised by A21 Greece and Cyberno about the safe use of internet and the prevention of human trafficking, in May. The issues that were addressed include online grooming, youth radicalization, tips for teenagers and their parents on how to be safe online. Find the event [here](#)



READ ABOUT:

► In the European/International context:



1) According to a report by the European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) of the Europol, “criminals are finding new ways to abuse the vulnerability of irregular migrants wishing to enter or travel across Europe and those financially struggling, victimised in labour or sexual exploitation schemes“. In another report on March 27, Europol also warned that fraudsters are taking advantage of the global health crisis. [Find out more.](#)

2) UNODC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime further recommends that governments act to ensure that while current restrictions on travel and freedom of movement are respected, access to essential services for victims of human trafficking is guaranteed without discrimination. [Find out more.](#)

3) The coronavirus pandemic could increase the prevalence of human trafficking across Europe as vulnerable people seek refuge and criminals capitalise on the disruption, experts have warned. Millions have been forced out of employment due to the pandemic, including migrant workers who may find themselves excluded from healthcare systems and without the means to return to their countries of origin, leaving them vulnerable to heightened levels of exploitation. [Find out more.](#)

4) The OSCE – The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe organised a webinar to shed light on the cross-linkages of trafficking in human beings, especially against the backdrop of the breakout of COVID-19. For the recording of the event please [click here.](#)

5) The European Commission has published [guidance](#) on the implementation of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU. The guidance recommends long-stay visa or a temporary residence permit to be issued to short-stay visa holders who cannot leave the EU territory. Non-EU travelers, who have to stay in the EU longer than they are authorized to because of travel restrictions, should not be penalized.

6) La Strada International (LSI) published its [statement](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on the protection of rights of trafficked and exploited persons. Two members of TOLERANT consortium are members of LSI – LEFO and Amimus.

7) In May, La Strada International provided written comments on the CEDAW Draft General Recommendation on Trafficking in Women and Girls in the Context of Global Migration. 27 independent NGOs working in the field of trafficking and migration have signed it. Among them are LEFO and Animus.

8) The European Commission recently released a call for Civil Society engagement on the topic of human trafficking with a view to draft a Third Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings. La Strada International responded to this call by submitting a report based on findings from its members covering 22 Member States. In its submission, La Strada International highlights the serious gaps in the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Directive. Find out more.

9) In April, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) launched a new dedicated [webpage](#), video and report: [A Worker is a Worker: How to ensure that undocumented migrant workers can access justice.](#)

10) In April, GREAT has published its 9th General report on its [activities.](#)

11) GRETA has released a new [GUIDANCE NOTE](#) on the entitlement of victims of trafficking, and persons at risk of being trafficked, to international protection

12) The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women has published a statement on the occasion of International Workers’ Day on the effects of the COVID- 19 Crisis on the World of Work. [Read here.](#)

READ ABOUT:

► In Romania:

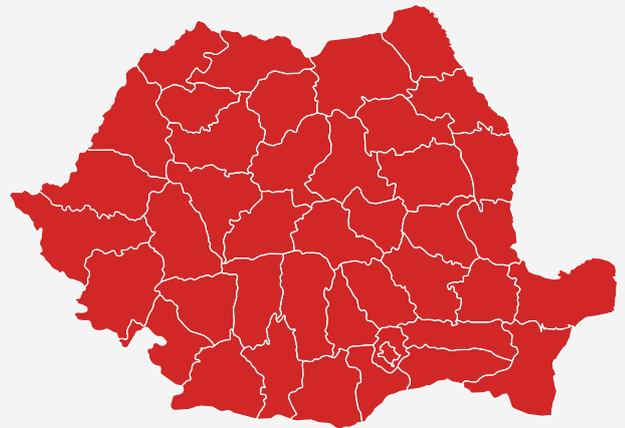
In Romania, in the first two months of 2020, AIDROM prepared and conducted training sessions with THB victims, in which employment opportunities and labor legislation were presented. Unfortunately, all efforts to identify jobs have been thwarted by the COVID-19 pandemic. All identified jobs have disappeared and, moreover, many of the women who had a job lost it during this period.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, both psychological counseling sessions and Romanian language courses were held online, as well as an extensive prevention campaign against COVID-19.

COVID-19 made people more responsible and sensitive to the needs of other persons. AIDRom staff and the beneficiaries paid a lot of work in order to offer help to other people at risk. AIDRom purchased and distributed disinfection materials - disinfectant and bactericidal solutions, antibacterial soap, bathrobes, protective masks and gloves, and the beneficiaries of the TOLERANT project, after a short vocational training, started to make cotton masks for both medical staff and other people in risk situation. Sewing machines were donated by some small workshops that had to close their businesses during the pandemic with COVID-19.

Moreover, in this difficult period, AIDRom supported and accommodated in its centers women victims of THB, single or with their babies. One of the pregnant beneficiaries, gave birth during the pandemic and now she helps other women by being interpreter for those accommodated in AIDRom shelter.

During this period, AIDRom in cooperation with the National Agency Against Trafficking in Human Beings, carried out a wide information campaign on the risks and implications of human trafficking, to which those looking for a working place can be exposed with a single "click". The message of the campaign is "Get informed! You can be a click away from becoming a victim of human trafficking". In this period of time, the prevention campaign is important due to the fact that a lot of refugees at high risk are seeking for a job and they can be easily exposed to traffickers.



READ ABOUT:

► In Italy:

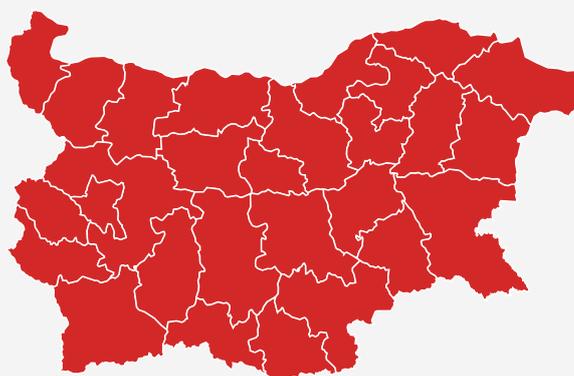


- During the emergency period due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in Italy, various legal provisions were adopted on immigration and on the release or renewal of residence permits. ASGI (an Italian association for legal studies on immigration) has produced useful documents summarising the main recent developments. For more information, [click here](#).
- From 25th to 27th February, Giovanna Bruno (Responsible of “Prendere il Volo”- Shelter for survivors of THB) and Cristina Laura Cecchini (lawyer) from DD NGO, took part in the Conference “Externalisation of frontiers. Detention practices and denial of the right of asylum”- Lagos, Nigeria. For more information, [click here](#).
- On March 25th, DD participated in the Webinar organized by the global network of Women’s Shelter on “Coronavirus and women’s shelters: planning, preparation and response to the COVID-19 pandemic”. For more information, [click here](#).
- On April 1st, lawyers Ilaria Boiano and Cristina Laura Cecchini, DD NGO, wrote an article entitled “How are migrant women in the pandemic” in “ingenera”, online magazine for information, in-depth analysis and debate on economic and social issues analysed from a gender perspective. For more information, [click here](#).
- The online platform attiviamoenergiepositive.it has organized, on April 8th, a free webinar entitled: “The emergency of violence against women in the days of COVID-19”. The speakers of the webinar were Elisa Ercoli, and Maria Teresa Manente, respectively president and head of the legal department of Differenza Donna ONG. For more information, [click here](#).
- On May 25th, the members of the Network against Human trafficking in the Veneto region wrote an article entitled “Sexual and Labour exploitation: Which challenges and adaptation strategies at the days of the pandemic?” in “ingenera”, online magazine for information, providing an interesting insight on the consequences of the COVID-19 emergency over the local support services for victims of trafficking. For more information, [click here](#).
- Despite the COVID-19 emergency, demand for sexual services of trafficked women has continued in several Italian regions. The alarm was launched in March by the Association Pope John XXIII. For more information, [click here](#).
- Streets got empty but exploitation has persisted. The article written by Anna Spina in “Vita”, online magazine for information, casted a light on victims’ life condition during the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, [click here](#).

READ ABOUT:

► In Bulgaria:

• On 22.01.2020, Vratsa District Court convicted a man of forcing his wife into prostitution every day during the second half of her pregnancy. The woman was victim of trafficking. The child was born premature during the sexual exploitation and sues the trafficker for prenatal moral harm. The court awarded the child 10'000 BGN (5'000 EUR) compensation for moral damages to be paid with interest as of the completion of the crime. The father received also a sentence of 12 years in prison. He will pay the awarded compensation by working in the prison. The mother and child are clients of the Animus Association. They were represented by lawyer Natasha Dobreva.



• In February 2020, the US Ambassador Ms. Hero Mustafa visited the Crisis Centre “St. Petka”. The Centre was created in 1999 by Animus and is still the only place in Sofia and the region where women victims of violence and their children can be accommodated. The Crisis Centre functions as a Transit Centre for trafficked women. Currently it is financed by Sofia Municipality.

Additionally, experts from Animus shared with representatives from US Embassy their opinion, based on the direct work with victims, on the situation of trafficking in Bulgaria and the respect of the rights of the victims. The information will be used for drafting the State Department Trafficking in Persons Report for Bulgaria for 2020 (TIP report).

• A new Crisis Centre for unaccompanied children and children victims of trafficking opened in Sofia. The team was trained by experts of Animus, which is the most experienced organization in providing direct support to the victims. You can [read more here](#).

• With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Bulgaria, Animus had to reorganize its work in order to comply with the safety measures and the requirement of social distancing while remaining available to victims who need help and support. All services continued to work as usual, but the physical meetings were replaced by consultations by phone or online. The Crisis Center remained available for the most severe cases.

• During quarantine times, Animus team continued to work with migrant women who are at risk of trafficking and exploitation. Interviews and consultations were held online with the kind support of the cultural mediators and translators of Caritas Sofia.

• The COVID-19 situation had an inevitable effect on victims of trafficking in Bulgaria. Less victims were identified and referred to services. Some of them were blocked abroad due to the closure of the borders.

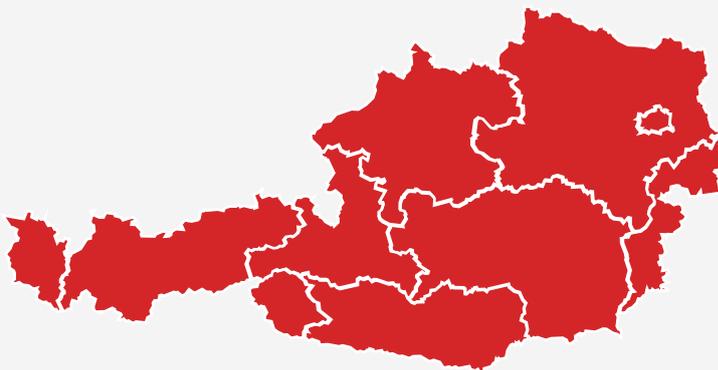
• The COVID-19 crisis opened the Pandora box of the situation of Bulgarian workers abroad. Thousands of seasonal workers migrate to Europe every year. They are employed in German and English agriculture, in the hotel industry in Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal, in the winter resorts of Austria and France, in the flower business in the Netherlands. Many people work in the informal economy as babysitters, carers and nurses. There are also hundreds employed in dairies, slaughterhouses, and orange and olive plantations in southern Europe. They work and live in terrible circumstances; they are low paid and not insured. They work without protection and are exposed to risk of accidents at work and COVID-19 infection. The quarantine forced many people to return to Bulgaria before the closure of the borders. Now when free movement is possible again they are eager to return to their workplaces despite the poor working conditions and are in higher risk of exploitation. For more information you can read [here](#) and [here](#).

• On the 3rd of June, the Council of Ministers approved the National Program for Prevention and Counteraction to Human Trafficking and Protection of Victims for 2020. The key outputs and deliverables of TOLERANT project like the Guide for Integrated Services are included in the program.

READ ABOUT:

► In Austria:

• GRETA's Third Evaluation Report for Austria has been published and is free to download. It gives an extensive overview of the developments of the situation in Austria. The report remarks that although victims of trafficking have access to a residence permit, there are still obstacles to overcome in the actual access to the labour market. Therefore, GREATA advises the Austrian authorities to strengthen the economic and social inclusion of victims of trafficking.



[Find out more.](#)

• Isabella Chen and Celeste Tortosa from LEFÖ-IBF have published an article in the 14th edition of the Anti-Trafficking Review arguing for a critical reflection on „The Use of Digital Evidence in Human Trafficking Investigations“. **[Read here.](#)**

The current edition of the Anti-Trafficking Review is a special issue focusing on Technology, Anti-Trafficking and Speculative Futures. Read the complete issue **[here.](#)**

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