

BELGIUM

I invite you to read the report :

Annual report 2015

Trafficking and smuggling of human beings. Tightening the links.

Myria (Federal Migration Center)

<https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/annual-report-2015-trafficking-and-smuggling-full.pdf>

The report about the situation in Belgium gives a lot of details : minors and young adults (forced marriages, loverboys), development of the phenomenon and the fight against human trafficking and smuggling (legal and political framework, case studies, best practices), case law overview and data base.

NEWS

26 May 2016

The 59th Chamber of the Brussels criminal court acquitted SA Quick and six Quick franchised restaurants of charges concerning the employment of unregistered foreign workers. Quick and its franchises were suspected of complicity in these facts. Illegal workers were employed by cleaning companies who performed subcontracted maintenance Quick many restaurants in Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia.

Article in French :

<http://www.lesoir.be/1220675/article/actualite/belgique/2016-05-25/exploitation-main-d-oeuvre-illegale-quick-acquitte>

« Exploitation de main-d'œuvre illégale: Quick acquitté »

20 January 2016

Elke Sleurs provides a double subsidy for trafficking shelters this year

In 2016, State Secretary for Equal Opportunities, Elke Sleurs, provides an amount of 495 000 euro for the three specialized centers for the reception and support of victims of trafficking. Payoke in Antwerp, Pag - Asa in Brussels and Surya in Liège get, like last year, each 165,000 euros extra on top of their normal funding. That's more than double their funding compared to 2014. Elke Sleurs announced this today during her working visit to Payoke in Antwerp.

The three reception centers for victims of trafficking work with multidisciplinary teams consisting of educators, social workers and criminologists. They provide shelter, counseling, psychological, medical

and legal assistance. Only these centers are authorized to apply for residence permits and renewals thereof directly to the Immigration Department for the victims of trafficking and smuggling. They also have a shelter at a secret location.

"It is essential that the specialised centers for victims of trafficking receive the necessary funding," said Sleurs. "The importance of their work is impossible to overstate. That is why I maintain in 2016 the increased subsidy. Given the current asylum crisis this is more than ever vital. "

Currently, at the federal level only the subsidy from the State Secretary for Equal Opportunities is structural. The other subsidies, including the National Lottery, have to be requested on a yearly basis. Last year, State Secretary Elke Sleurs already provided additional funding of 163 000 euro per center. Also in 2016, this amount is thus maintained and even increased to 165 000 euro. Since the election of this government the centers received a total of 984 000 euro extra budget.

11 January 2016

Largest smuggling gang ever in Belgium arrested

The federal police of East Flanders delivered a major blow to international smuggling. A gang has been rolled up that smuggled up to twenty migrants a day across the Channel. Ten suspects are in custody.

Two thousand euros per person, so much did approximately 3,000 undocumented migrants pay to gang of Kurdish smugglers. The smugglers were operating out of our country. Their goal: to get migrants clandestinely in Britain and exploit them.

The migrants gathered in parking lots along the highway E40, in Grand-Bigard, and along the E17, in Kalken and Waasmunster, to hide in the back of trucks. This probably happened with the complicity of the truck drivers.

In May last year the federal judicial police of East Flanders launched an investigation. Between late May and late November, the investigators were able to trace all active gang members in Belgium and arrested them. Ten suspects are in the cell. The two key figures, operating out of England, were arrested on Friday. The Belgian court asks the two to be extradited as soon as possible.

Up to twenty migrants a day were smuggled across the Channel. The numbers surpass all previous studies around human smuggling in our country.

15 January 2016

Albanian women trafficked in EU: abused, rejected, abandoned

Abused by gangsters, disowned by their families, and let down by the state, Albanian women who were trafficked as sex slaves face an uphill battle to build new lives.

The area around the Place de l'Yser in Brussels is the Albanian sex workers' patch. Their territory is just a couple of kilometres from the city's central square, the Grand Place, where thousands of tourists flock every day, and from the EU institutions.

After a coffee at a corner cafe around midday, the women wait for clients on the streets. Ten minutes of sex costs no more than €50. (...)

<https://euobserver.com/investigations/131964>

Project

RAVOT-EUR Project

Referral of and assistance for victims of human trafficking in Europe

The Ministry of Interior of Hungary, the Ministry of Security and Justice of The Netherlands and Payoke vzw of Belgium submitted an application „Referral of and assistance for victims of human trafficking in Europe” (hereinafter RAVOT-EUR) for Action Grants under the Programme “Prevention of and Fight against Crime” 2012 ISEC General Call for Proposals of the European Commission.

The European Commission delivered a favourable opinion on the application, so the project could be officially launched on 1 February 2014, and by 31 January 2016 RAVOT-EUR may provide comprehensive solutions for the challenges posed by the hideous crime of trafficking in human beings. The main aim of the project is to provide the victims of sexual or labour exploitation with assistance in their return and social reintegration, and also to set up an online platform and devise an information manual that can be further used for professional and academic purposes. Another objective is to enhance cooperation among experts involved in the fight against human trafficking. The total budget of the project is 346 069 EUR, 311 462 EUR of which is provided by the European Union Specific Programme “Prevention of and Fight against Crime”.

The main aim of the project is to develop a transnational referral mechanism among Hungary, Belgium and the Netherlands. This would contribute to the assistance, safe return and referral of human trafficking victims and facilitate transnational networking and trust building among professionals. The two partner countries of the RAVOT-EUR – which was initiated and is led by Hungary – are Belgium and the Netherlands, the countries where Hungarian victims of human trafficking are found most frequently, so the cooperation has been established on a solid basis. It is important to recognize that trafficking in human beings is such a serious and hideous crime which severely violates human rights, and the international community can only fight against it through wide international cooperation. The RAVOT-EUR facilitates the development of a better understanding and increased trust among law enforcement authorities, NGOs, and all actors in the field of referring and assisting victims of human trafficking.

The outcome of the project is that the needs and problems of the victims, as well as the capacity and network of victim assistance services and NGO's will become clear. In the framework of the project an information manual and a website will be developed, which will provide help in victim identification, assistance and the cooperation of experts. With the RAVOT-EUR, a new transnational referral mechanism will be set up in which the work of the organizations and parties involved, and

the reintegration of the victims will be supported in a sustainable way. At the same time the project will use legal and institutional frameworks already existing at a national level and intends to satisfy the victims' personal needs. A well-structured and unified transnational referral mechanism will enhance the safe return of the victims and contribute to the effective work of the organizations assisting them.

During the project three professional workshops were held in the three partner countries, involving international experts in order to discuss best practices and the different needs, circumstances and capabilities. In addition to the workshops, experts took part in study visits during which they had the opportunity to learn about the work of the Hungarian, Dutch and Belgian authorities, the quality of the services provided, and the operation of the transnational referral mechanisms.

They hope that the information manual and the website of the project will facilitate and significantly enhance the sustainability of the RAVOT-EUR, while bolstering transparency and providing experts and victims with an appropriate forum, a more simple way of getting in touch, and access to information.

www.ravot-eur.eu