

PROTECTION AGAINST (SEXUAL) EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES FROM PREVIOUS CYCLES

The 5 previous recommendations made by Panama, Morocco, Uruguay, Tunisia and Indonesia call for the continuation and strengthening of efforts to protect and rehabilitate children victim of sexual exploitation and trafficking, all of which were supported by the Netherlands.

In March 2022, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended the Netherlands in its Concluding Observations to:

- a) issue special residency permits for all alleged child victims of trafficking,
- b) develop a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Together against human trafficking' program,
- c) ensure that all municipalities have action plans to prevent and combat trafficking,
- d) address online sexual abuse and exploitation.

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

A modernised sexual offenses bill is developed and is planned to enter into force in 2024. Though expected in spring 2022, the new bill has not yet been submitted to the House of Representatives. The law aims to safeguard the position of victims more strongly and is geared towards addressing online elements of sexual exploitation.

The government programme *Together against human trafficking* will continue under the current coalition agreement, now also including online and criminal exploitation. Municipalities are obliged to develop an approach to tackle human trafficking by 2022. In 2021, a plan was presented to realize this goal.

CHALLENGES

1

The visibility of child victims of trafficking is decreasing, with no indication that this problem is actually decreasing.

2

Revictimization is high.

3

The approach to combat human trafficking remains fragmented.

IMPACTS

The proportion of reported child victims of human trafficking continues to fall, from 25% of all victims in 2015 to 8% in 2019. There is no indication that this problem is actually decreasing. On estimate, one third of victims are minors. When comparing observed and estimated cases of human trafficking, child victims of sexual exploitation have a particularly low visibility.

45% of victims of human trafficking in the Netherlands become a victim of another crime within five years. Child victims of exploitation have a higher risk of revictimization.

The approach to combat human trafficking remains fragmented, with a lack of coordination and too little attention for prevention. The number of suspects of human trafficking decreased in 2016-2019 but has been increasing in 2020 and 2021. In 2019, 145 of the targeted 190 human trafficking suspects were prosecuted (311 in 2012). Dismissals of cases increased from 27% (2016) to 41% (2019).

CHALLENGES

4 Where instruments or policies are available, their application is limited.

5 Victims of sexual violence and exploitation often do not have access to appropriate support in time.

IMPACTS

Dutch legal instruments and opportunities to prevent transnational sexual child abuse are little used and police capacity to tackle it is limited. A policy change making children eligible for a temporary residency permit even if they do not report human trafficking was implemented in 2019. In practice these permits are hardly ever issued, because concrete investigative indications are lacking.

Oftentimes, victims cope with multiple problems simultaneously. In 2017 and 2018, 15% of identified victims of sexual violence did not receive support within six months. In total, 10% of the victims of human trafficking have stopped receiving youth care prematurely. Specialized youth care, which is essential for long-term recovery and prevention of revictimisation, is not always procured by municipalities. The support children receive depends on the municipality where they live and their residence status instead of on their needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure the sexual offenses bill is adopted before 2023 and implemented as soon as possible after this.
- Strengthen efforts to improve insights into child trafficking and exploitation, promote coordination and deploy the available (digital) instruments to end all forms of child trafficking and exploitation including transnational and online.
- Prioritise early provision of care and make specialised youth care accessible to all child victims of trafficking and exploitation regardless of their municipality or residence status.

QUESTIONS

- Does the government intend to improve the visibility of (child) victims of trafficking and exploitation to ensure they do not go unnoticed?
- How will the government stimulate the application of the available instruments to end all forms of child trafficking and exploitation?
- How will the government ensure specialized youth care is accessible to all child victims of trafficking and exploitation regardless of their municipality or residence status?

Improve insights and coordination to end all forms of child trafficking and exploitation

Sources

- [Joint Submission to the Human Rights Council by the Dutch NGO Coalition on Children's Rights \(2022\)](#)
- [Fifth NGO report of the Dutch NGO Coalition for Children's Rights to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child \(2021\)](#)

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