

Improved Data Collection and Support to Research on Human Trafficking in the Region



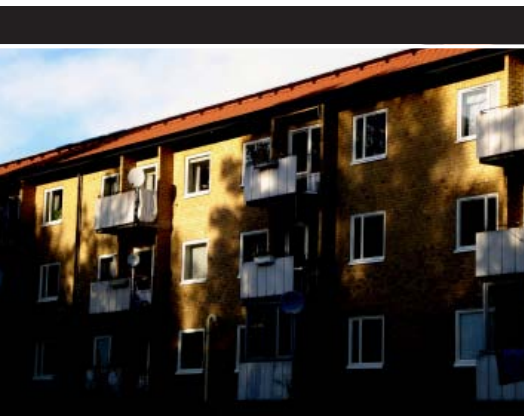
In order to develop policies and working methods that successfully counteract human trafficking it is essential to have the right tools to monitor the changing patterns of the crime. Reliable data and statistics on human trafficking are essential to constantly enhance and update the knowledge base in this field. Only if there is sufficient statistical information on the victims, the traffickers, the trafficking process and the criminal justice responses, can victims of human trafficking be properly identified and assisted.

Trafficking in human beings is a clandestine activity. The victims of this crime are part of a hidden population which is hard to reach and observe. Therefore, it is difficult to precisely identify the magnitude of the problem and the characteristics of the persons involved in the crime. There is a significant discrepancy between the estimated number of victims and those detected which is exacerbated by the concealed nature of human trafficking. This poses challenges for data collection which is necessary in order to:

- develop effective and well-targeted prevention and protection mechanisms
- produce successful strategies to act against traffickers
- generate appropriate criminal justice responses to fight the crime

It is important that organisations and authorities within a country exchange the collected data in order to map trafficking patterns on the national level. Since trafficking in human beings is a cross border crime it is also important that the statistical data is exchanged between countries, in order to identify common issues and regional trends. Apart from this, it is essential to know what data is collected, how and by whom. It is also vital to consider how the data is protected and who has access to it.

In recent years continuous progress has been made towards the development of a common understanding of human trafficking and the establishment of common indicators for data collection. Nonetheless, there are still weaknesses in data collection mechanisms and knowledge exchange between various actors.





The CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (TF-THB) recognises the importance of supporting research endeavours concerning data collection on human trafficking. Since a regional assessment review had not yet been performed, the TF-THB has launched a study on data collection mechanisms on human trafficking in the CBSS Member States.

For this project, the TF-THB is using the Guidelines for the Collection of Data on Trafficking in Human Beings, including Comparable Indicators as a starting point. These guidelines were developed in 2009 under a joint project of the Federal Ministry of the Interior of Austria in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Vienna and with financial support from the European Commission.

Using the Guidelines as a background, the purpose of the project is to map **what type, how** and by **whom** data is currently being collected in the 11 CBSS Member States.

The overall objective of this project is to support and contribute to an enhanced knowledge base on data collection in the CBSS Region and thereby strengthen the relevant actors to better counteract trafficking in human beings. The project also promotes international and regional research on human trafficking, especially focusing on data collection mechanisms. This will increase policy makers' understanding of the issue and enable more targeted policy and programmatic responses.

The investigation will culminate in the production of an assessment study, which will be presented and discussed with counter trafficking actors and relevant researchers.

