

CZECH REPUBLIC (TIER 1)

The Czech Republic is a transit and destination country for women from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Slovakia, Bulgaria, People's Republic of China (P.R.C.), and Vietnam trafficked to and through the Czech Republic for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. It is also a source of Czech women trafficked to Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark for sexual exploitation. The Czech Republic is a destination country for men and women trafficked from Ukraine, Moldova, the P.R.C., Vietnam, Belarus, India, and North Korea for the purpose of labor exploitation. Ethnic Roma women remain at the highest risk for trafficking internally and abroad for sexual exploitation.

The Government of the Czech Republic fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The Czech Republic made several positive efforts over the reporting period, including: the creation of a new forced labor police unit; the elimination of a program of exploitative North Korean contract labor for private industry in the Czech Republic; and the funding of a demand reduction campaign in several regions of the country and in Ukraine. The government should: vigorously prosecute and convict traffickers and increase the number of convicted traffickers serving time in prison; continue to provide training for prosecutors and judges; and continue to train labor inspectors on how to identify victims of labor trafficking.

Prosecution

The Czech Republic demonstrated increased law enforcement efforts over the last year. The Czech Republic prohibits trafficking both for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and for forced labor through Sections 232a, 216, and 204 of its criminal code, respectively. Punishments prescribed in these statutes range from 2 to 15 years' imprisonment, which are sufficiently stringent, and commensurate with those for other grave crimes. In 2006, police conducted 16 investigations, compared to 18 investigations in 2005. In 2006, the government prosecuted 151 persons, compared to 12 in 2005. The government obtained the convictions of 72 traffickers during the reporting period, compared to 72 convictions in 2005; most traffickers were prosecuted and convicted under the pimping statute. The government provided training sessions for prosecutors and judges that focused on the need for stronger sentences to be given to convicted traffickers. Czech law enforcement officials continued to cooperate with counterparts in other countries in joint trafficking investigations throughout 2006. Three Israeli nationals hiding in the Czech Republic were extradited to Israel for trafficking Ukrainian women. There were no confirmed cases of government officials involved in trafficking; however, concerns remained that individual officers of the border police facilitate border crossing for traffickers.

Protection

The government sustained its efforts to protect and assist victims. The government continued to fund IOM and three NGOs to provide victim assistance, rehabilitation services, and shelter. NGOs provided at least 67 victims with government-funded, comprehensive assistance. The government provides a 30-day reflection period for victims to decide whether or not to cooperate with law enforcement. Victims are encouraged to assist in investigations and prosecutions; victims who assist law enforcement are granted temporary residence and work visas for the duration of the criminal proceedings. Upon conclusion of the trial, qualifying victims may apply for permanent residency; one victim was granted permanent residency in 2006, compared to two victims in 2005. During the reporting period, police actively used the formal victim identification and referral system to refer victims to NGOs. Because of the stigma attached to trafficking, victims were frequently hesitant to return to their families or seek social service providers. The government also produced a 90-page book for health care practitioners to assist in victim identification. The Czech Republic continued to fund an IOM repatriation program for victims from Georgia, Moldova, and Armenia.

Prevention

The government improved its trafficking awareness efforts during the reporting period. In 2006, the government funded a demand reduction campaign that informed potential clients of prostitution about trafficking and provided methods for anonymously reporting suspected trafficking situations. The government also took pro-active steps to combat labor trafficking by funding two NGOs to provide information to Ukrainian citizens in ten Ukrainian cities who are looking to work in the Czech Republic.

The government monitors migration and immigration patterns for evidence of trafficking. The Czech Republic has not ratified the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.