

CZECH REPUBLIC (Tier 1)

The Czech Republic is a source, transit, and destination country for women from Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Belarus, Moldova, Slovakia, Bulgaria, China, and Vietnam trafficked to Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. The Czech Republic is a destination country for men and women trafficked from Ukraine, China, Vietnam, Moldova, and Belarus for the purpose of labor exploitation. Roma women are trafficked within the country and abroad for sexual exploitation.

The Government of the Czech Republic fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. During the reporting period, the government increased the number of convicted traffickers serving time in prison and conducted aggressive trafficking investigations, leading to the arrest of dozens of suspected traffickers and freeing more than 100 victims including nearly 50 victims of forced labor.

Recommendations for the Czech Republic: Continue anti-trafficking training for judges and prosecutors to ensure sustaining the trend of increasing the number of convicted traffickers serving time in prison; increase use of Section 232a of the criminal code to ensure higher penalties for sex and labor trafficking; and continue efforts to investigate and prosecute labor trafficking cases.

Prosecution

The Government of the Czech Republic demonstrated increased law enforcement efforts over the previous year. The Czech Republic prohibits trafficking for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor through Sections 232a, 216, and 204 of its Criminal Code, and prescribes punishments ranging from two to 15 years' imprisonment. These punishments are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape. In 2007, police conducted 11 investigations and prosecuted 121 persons for trafficking offenses, compared to 16 investigations and 151 persons reported prosecuted in 2006. The government convicted 78 traffickers during the reporting period, compared to 72 convictions in 2006. In 2007, 29 percent—23 out of 78 convicted traffickers—were sentenced to serve time in prison. This was an increase over 2006, when 17 percent—12 out of 72 convicted traffickers—were sentenced to serve time in prison. In 2007, 20 traffickers were sentenced to one to five years' imprisonment, and three traffickers were sentenced to five to 15 years' imprisonment. This was an increase from 2006, when 10 traffickers were sentenced to prison terms of one to five years, and no traffickers were sentenced to more than five years in prison. In 2007, the government extradited one trafficking suspect.

During the reporting period, anti-trafficking courses became required for new judges at the Czech judicial academy; approximately 60 judges and prosecutors received the training during 2007. In July 2007, the country's forced labor unit of the Police dismantled a labor trafficking ring, rescuing approximately 50 mostly Ukrainian and Bulgarian victims. The government subsequently initiated prosecutions of three Ukrainian leaders of the trafficking ring. Several other large-scale raids resulted in dozens of trafficking arrests and prosecutions. There were no confirmed cases of government officials involved in trafficking. The government provided labor inspectors and representatives of the Work Registration Offices with training in identifying cases of labor trafficking.

Protection

The government sustained strong efforts to protect and assist victims. In December 2007, the government increased the reflection period granted to identified victims from 30 to 60 days; during this time, victims can decide whether to cooperate with law enforcement. NGOs in 2007 provided approximately 75 victims with government-funded comprehensive assistance and shelter, compared to 67 victims in 2006. The government also funded NGOs to assist both foreign and Czech victims with repatriation and reintegration. Victims were encouraged to assist in investigations and prosecutions; victims who cooperated with investigators were granted temporary residence and work visas for the duration of the legal proceedings. Upon conclusion of the prosecutions, qualifying victims had the opportunity to apply for permanent residency; three victims were granted permanent residency in 2007, compared to one victim in 2006. NGOs stated the majority of victims referred to them during the reporting period made initial contact through the police, demonstrating the continued effectiveness of police training. Victims were not fined or otherwise penalized for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of their being trafficked.

Prevention

The government sustained its trafficking prevention efforts during the reporting period. The government continued funding a demand reduction campaign that informed foreign tourists visiting the Czech Republic for the purpose of adult sex tourism about human trafficking and provided guidance for anonymously reporting suspected trafficking cases. In April 2007, the government provided trafficking awareness training to 65 senior military officers prior to their deployment on international peacekeeping missions. The government monitors migration and immigration patterns for evidence of trafficking. The Czech Republic has not ratified the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.