

## **MOLDOVA (TIER 2)**

Moldova is a major source country for trafficking in women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Victims are trafficked throughout Europe and the Middle East, increasingly to Turkey, Israel, the U.A.E., and Russia. To a lesser extent, Moldova serves as a transit country to European destinations for victims trafficked from other former Soviet states. Reports of internal trafficking of girls from rural areas to Chisinau continued. The small breakaway region of Transnistria in eastern Moldova is outside the central government's control and remained a significant source and transit area for trafficking in persons.

The Government of Moldova does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. In 2005, the government continued to improve its law enforcement response, increasing trafficking investigations and convicting more traffickers. It passed comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation and updated and improved its National Action Plan. However, the government showed a lack of anti-trafficking leadership by depending almost exclusively on NGOs to carry out its work on prevention and protection. The government, through its National Committee on Trafficking in Persons, should implement the new National Action Plan, devote increased resources to prevention, and provide victims with protection and assistance.

### ***Prosecution***

The Government of Moldova made modest progress in its efforts to punish acts of trafficking over the last year. Although the Moldovan criminal code contains specific penalties for trafficking, some prosecutors continued to use lighter pimping charges. In December 2005, the government passed comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation, criminalizing both sexual exploitation and forced labor trafficking. However, successful implementation of the law remains unclear without a commitment of resources from the government. The government increased its law enforcement efforts, investigating 386 cases of trafficking in 2005. Of the 314 cases referred for prosecution, 58 traffickers were convicted, an increase from 23 convictions in 2004. Only 36 traffickers received actual imprisonment; the rest paid fines or were granted amnesty. Unfortunately, the government increased its use of suspended sentences in 2005. Although some suspended sentences resulted from inadequate investigations, others continued to be related to judicial corruption. During the reporting period, the government disbanded the Ministry of Interior's Anti-Trafficking Unit and replaced it with a new inter-agency Center to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Allegations of trafficking related corruption among some law enforcement officials continued, although the government did not take action. In 2005, the government sentenced a police officer accused of collaborating with a Turkish trafficker to 10 years in prison. A former Moldovan policeman charged with trafficking women to the U.A.E. remains free on bail pending completion of his trial after deportation from the Emirates.

### ***Protection***

The Government of Moldova's efforts to protect and reintegrate trafficking victims remained weak throughout the reporting period. The government did not fund NGOs providing shelter and assistance to trafficking victims, but it continued to cooperate with them on a limited basis. In June 2005, the Moldovan Parliament amended a law on employment and social protection to allow trafficking victims and other vulnerable populations to receive government benefits; however, the government did not report providing any benefits to trafficking victims. Contrary to what was stated in last year's Report, the government did not provide space in state buildings for a rehabilitation center run by IOM. The government's witness protection law remained inadequately implemented and thus, while in some cases police posted guards outside witnesses' homes, many victims did not feel secure enough to testify against their traffickers. No progress was made in the development of a formal referral system; however, the police informally referred 88 victims to IOM during the reporting period. Overall, IOM reported assisting 464 victims during the reporting period. In January 2006, the government, in partnership with IOM, launched a program to build the capacity of Moldovan consular officers abroad to assist potential and actual victims of trafficking.

### ***Prevention***

NGOs and international organizations continued to conduct the bulk of anti-trafficking prevention and education campaigns in 2005, with periodic participation from the government. NGO prevention efforts included outreach to potential victims of trafficking in the mass media and in rural areas as well as education efforts in schools. The National Committee on Trafficking in Persons continued to meet to review the government's anti-trafficking efforts, but met less often during the reporting period. In August 2005, the government approved a new National Action Plan based on regional best practices, developed with the active guidance of a local NGO.