

2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Slovak Republic

SLOVAK REPUBLIC (Tier 2)

The Government of the Slovak Republic, or Slovakia, does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period; therefore, the Slovak Republic remained on Tier 2. These efforts included partnering with and funding civil society to provide victim services and closing two government-run residential “re-education facilities,” where staff allegedly exploited boys in forced labor. Labor inspectors reported referring trafficking cases to law enforcement for the first time in years. Courts convicted more traffickers. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government investigated and prosecuted fewer alleged traffickers for the fourth consecutive year. Courts continued to issue lenient sentences, resulting in 85 percent of convicted traffickers receiving fully suspended sentences; suspended sentences undercut efforts to hold traffickers accountable and did not reflect the seriousness of the crime. Authorities identified fewer victims overall, and efforts to proactively identify foreign national victims remained inadequate. The government did not report criminally investigating allegations of some staff at government-run residential “re-education facilities” who had exploited boys into forced labor. National police remained the sole entity able to formally identify trafficking victims, which may have hindered victim identification and deterred some victims from seeking assistance.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking crimes, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, including complicit officials, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Improve sentencing practices by training judges about the severity of trafficking crimes and the importance of applying the penalties available under the trafficking law.
- Increase training for front-line officials – including law enforcement, border police, labor inspectors, and service providers – on proactively identifying victims among vulnerable populations, such as migrant workers, refugees, asylum-seekers, children in institutional care and “re-education facilities,” and Roma.
- Increase training for law enforcement and judicial officials on victim-centered, trauma-informed approaches to criminal proceedings, as well as the use of psychological coercion and fraud as a means of trafficking.
- Increase the availability and quality of specialized protection services – including short-term shelter, long-term housing, counseling, and medical care – for all trafficking victims.
- Partner with civil society to ensure a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach to the provision of assistance for all victims identified.
- Allow formal victim identification by entities other than the national police, including civil society, social workers, and healthcare professionals.
- Increase trafficking survivors’ access to damages and compensation by providing legal aid and ensuring prosecutors’ systematically request restitution during criminal trials.
- Ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.
- Ensure trafficking crimes are not misclassified as “prostitution” related offenses, child abuse, administrative labor violations, or other crimes with lesser penalties.

- Consistently enforce strong regulations and oversight of labor recruitment companies, including by enforcing the law prohibiting worker-paid recruitment fees and holding fraudulent labor recruiters criminally accountable.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained law enforcement efforts.

Section 179 of the Criminal Code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of four to 10 years' imprisonment. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape.

In 2024, law enforcement investigated 18 trafficking cases (12 sex trafficking, three labor trafficking, and three unspecified forms of trafficking), compared with 19 investigations in 2023 and 25 in 2022. The government reported eight investigations initiated in previous years remained ongoing. Prosecutors indicted 17 alleged traffickers for unspecified forms of trafficking, a multi-year decrease compared with 25 alleged traffickers in 2023 and 30 in 2022. Six of the defendants were children. Courts convicted 20 traffickers, compared with 18 traffickers in 2023. The government did not disaggregate data between sex and labor trafficking for prosecutions or convictions. Seventeen out of 20 convicted traffickers (85 percent) received fully suspended sentences and served no jail time, compared with 10 out of 18 traffickers (56 percent) in 2023. In comparison, 13 of 32 convicted rapists in 2024 (40 percent) were sentenced to at least one year's imprisonment. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in trafficking crimes; however, corruption, inefficiency, and lack of accountability within the judicial branch remained concerns and may have hindered law enforcement efforts. The government closed two of the 13 facilities during the reporting period but did not report initiating any criminal investigations or screening the children for trafficking indicators.

Lenient sentencing, especially fully suspended sentences, undercut efforts to hold traffickers accountable, weakened deterrence, created potential security and safety concerns – particularly for victims who cooperated with investigations and prosecutions – and was not equal to the seriousness of the crime. Over the past 10 years, approximately 71 percent of all trafficking convictions resulted in fully suspended sentences or a fine. Experts assessed a lack of understanding of the severity of trafficking crimes, the limited use of corroborating evidence, and an overreliance on victim testimony contributed to lenient sentences for convicted traffickers. Furthermore, some judges may have issued more lenient sentences for convicted traffickers in cases involving victims from some vulnerable populations, particularly Romani persons. GRETA's 2025 report noted courts often imposed penalties below the minimum prescribed under Section 179 of the criminal code based on mitigating circumstances, such as the perpetrator admitting guilt, or due to acceptance of plea agreements between the prosecutor and defendant. Lower penalties also resulted from trafficking cases being reclassified as other crimes, such as “pimping.”

The National Unit for Combating Migration within the Bureau of Border and Alien Police (BBAP) was responsible for coordinating national anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts; however, observers reported the unit lacked resources and training to effectively investigate trafficking crimes. During the reporting period, the government disbanded the National Crime Agency, a police branch overseeing corruption and organized crime cases, further weakening law enforcement's ability to investigate complex trafficking cases. Although there was no dedicated anti-trafficking prosecution unit, each of the eight regional prosecutorial offices had a human trafficking lead that could provide guidance and oversight on cases. The government provided anti-trafficking training to police officers, military personnel, consular staff, and child service providers. However, it did not report providing any specialized training to prosecutors or judges. Experts reported law enforcement and prosecutors often misclassified potential trafficking crimes as procuring and soliciting “prostitution,” “pimping,” child abuse, administrative labor violations, or other crimes. Some prosecutors and judges continued to misunderstand the role of non-violent, psychological

coercion and fraud as means for the crime, and they continued to rely predominately on evidence of force and physical limitations on victims' liberty in trials. In October 2024, the European Court of Human Rights issued a judgment finding Slovakia failed to effectively investigate a credible trafficking case and incorrectly prosecuted it as "pimping," which carried lighter penalties. The judgment also criticized the excessive length of the criminal proceedings and authorities' failure to examine the abuse of the victim's vulnerability as a means of trafficking.

The government signed an agreement with Czechia to establish an anti-trafficking joint investigative team. Law enforcement and prosecutors continued to collaborate with EU agencies and international organizations, including through "joint action days," but authorities did not identify any victims or traffickers in Slovakia during these operations.

PROTECTION

The government maintained victim protection efforts.

The police formally identified 35 victims (22 sex trafficking and 13 labor trafficking) in 2024, a multi-year decrease compared with 38 victims identified in 2023 and 45 in 2022. A majority of victims (57 percent) were children, and two victims were foreign nationals. Seven victims were from the Roma community. In addition to victims identified by the government, NGOs reported identifying eight victims (three sex trafficking and five labor trafficking victims), including six adults and two children.

Law enforcement officials were the only entity authorized to formally identify victims. Although access to victim services was not dependent on formal police identification, experts asserted this policy may have deterred victims from seeking assistance and hindered overall victim identification and protection efforts. Law enforcement proactively screened for trafficking indicators among vulnerable populations, including Ukrainian refugees. However, gaps in victim identification remained a serious concern, especially among migrant workers. Despite the large number of non-EU nationals present in Slovakia and increased vulnerability to trafficking, the government did not report identifying any foreign national victims from outside of the EU. The government continued to utilize its NRM, which focused heavily on transnational trafficking and included little information on referring victims identified in Slovakia. The government provided NRM and victim identification training to law enforcement and other front-line officials; however, experts questioned the thoroughness and effectiveness of the trainings.

The government-funded NGO victim service provider gave services to 53 victims; of the 27 newly-enrolled participants, law enforcement identified and referred 17 victims. The remaining victims identified by law enforcement declined services. The government maintained €1.415 million (\$1.472 million) of funding over a five-year period for its national victim assistance program, voluntary repatriation efforts, and national trafficking hotline; it expended €256,900 (\$267,325) in 2024. The government-funded, NGO-run victim services program provided shelter, financial support, recovery assistance, reintegration, repatriation to Slovakia, health care, psycho-social support, legal assistance, interpretation, and job training. However, the percentage of victims who chose to enroll in the government-funded victim service program was typically low. The victim service provider operated a shelter for adult victims and could also refer victims to domestic violence and homeless shelters when space in the victim service program was unavailable. Authorities could place child victims in government or NGO-run children's homes licensed to provide trafficking-specific services, and those child victims could access services through the victim service provider. There were limited accommodations available for victims with families. In its 2025 report, GRETA urged the government to increase protection and reintegration services for children vulnerable to trafficking, including children living in and exiting institutional care, unaccompanied and refugee children, and Roma children. Experts criticized the limited availability and quality of specialized services for trafficking victims and urged the government to improve services and oversight of the victim assistance program, independent of the Ministry of Interior (MOI). All potential victims were eligible for at least 90 days of crisis care, regardless of whether

they were formally identified by police, while those enrolled in the assistance program could receive up to 180 days of care without having to participate in an investigation. Other NGOs provided limited services to victims who chose not to enroll in the government-funded assistance program, depending on funding and availability. Victims who chose to cooperate with law enforcement could access services for the duration of the criminal proceedings. However, observers reported some victims had to leave the victim service program after courts reclassified their cases as “pimping.” Foreign victims had access to the same services as Slovak victims, and the law did not require foreign victims to obtain work permits to seek employment. A government-funded NGO provided repatriation support to two victims. The law authorized permanent residency for foreign victims who would face hardship or retribution if they returned to their countries of origin; however, authorities did not report granting residency to any victims during the reporting period.

Due to inadequate screening among vulnerable populations, the government did not take effective measures to prevent the inappropriate penalization of potential victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. The law did not prohibit the penalization of trafficking victims for administrative and immigration-related offenses they were compelled to commit, and therefore authorities penalized some trafficking victims. As in the previous year, law enforcement reportedly detained and extradited foreign nationals for participating in unlawful business practices (mainly illegal cigarette production) without adequately screening for trafficking indicators. The government could place asylum-seekers in detention for up to six months per Slovak law. Immigration authorities lacked adequate training and did not consistently screen migrants and asylum seekers in immigration detention facilities for trafficking indicators; as in past years, authorities did not report identifying any victims among this population.

The 2017 Crime Victims Act and the Code of Criminal Procedure included trauma-informed protection for victim-witnesses participating in law enforcement proceedings. These included access to psychological assistance, protections against re-traumatization during cross-examination, bans on child victims’ contact with perpetrators in court, and the option for judges to allow recorded testimony. Courts could also keep victims’ identities confidential during criminal proceedings, and the victim service provider offered secure accommodations. Law enforcement maintained 28 specialized interview rooms for vulnerable victim-witnesses, including trafficking victims, and eight courts had similar facilities for child victims. The government continued to implement a 2020 guideline requiring investigators to invite the government-funded NGO victim services provider to victim interviews to provide information on available services, including legal services. Observers reported that some prosecutors and judges assigned to trafficking cases lacked adequate training on trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches and on the specific dynamics of trafficking crimes. Inconsistent application of these protections and lengthy trial processes sometimes contributed to re-traumatization. Unlike the previous year, the government did not report providing training on trauma-informed procedures to prosecutors or judges. Experts reported law enforcement sometimes pressured victims to cooperate in investigations or used overly-interrogative interview techniques, which may have deterred cooperation and impeded rapport-building with victims.

The law allowed victims to obtain restitution, and victims could file civil suits against their traffickers. However, courts rarely ordered restitution, instead directing victims to seek damages through civil suits to avoid prolonged proceedings. Excessive legal costs, lengthy proceedings, and potential risk of re-traumatization often discouraged victims from filing civil suits. The government did not report awarding any restitution to any victims in 2024, compared with two victims in 2023; observers reported that, even when restitution was ordered, it was rarely paid. The government did not report awarding damages to any victims in 2024. Victims who filed civil suits against their traffickers were not eligible for restitution through criminal proceedings. Under the 2017 Crime Victims Act, the Ministry of Justice could grant compensation during criminal proceedings through a dedicated fund, and it awarded compensation to three victims in 2024, compared with two victims in 2023. The Legal Aid Center could assist trafficking victims with civil cases and during asylum proceedings; however, to date, it had not done so. The victim service provider could offer legal representation in criminal, civil, family, or labor cases in cooperation with pro bono attorneys.

PREVENTION

The government slightly increased prevention efforts.

The MOI State Secretary served as the national anti-trafficking coordinator and led the inter-agency anti-trafficking committee (the “Expert Group”). The Expert Group comprised 27 members from government ministries and NGOs and coordinated anti-trafficking policy, implemented anti-trafficking programs, organized trainings, evaluated action plans, and coordinated awareness-raising campaigns. It met once in 2024, compared with five meetings in 2023. The government maintained its 2024-2028 National Anti-Trafficking Plan but did not report allocating dedicated resources towards its implementation. The government, both independently and in collaboration with an NGO, held trainings and public awareness campaigns targeting refugees, teachers and other front-line personnel, students, and the general public; the government incorporated survivor input and stories into its awareness activities. A government-funded NGO conducted some awareness raising activities in migrant detention centers. The government did not report prevention or awareness raising efforts among Romani communities vulnerable to trafficking. However, it maintained a National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation of Roma seeking to increase socio-economic opportunities and reduce vulnerability of Romani populations, especially women and girls. The government-funded victim service provider operated an anti-trafficking hotline 12 hours per day in four languages; the hotline received 431 calls and identified 18 potential trafficking victims, compared with no potential victims identified in 2023. The MOI’s Information Center for the Fight Against Human Trafficking and Crime Prevention functioned as the national rapporteur and was responsible for data collection and analysis, as well as oversight of the victim assistance program. However, observers noted limited capacity and resources, and a lack of independence impeded the Information Center’s ability to effectively monitor national anti-trafficking efforts.

In response to the Russia-Ukraine war, the government continued coordinating with international organizations on emergency response plans, including trafficking prevention. The government continued to implement previously developed trafficking prevention guidelines for Ukrainian unaccompanied minors. The MOI, along with international organizations, continued an anti-trafficking awareness campaign targeting refugees from Ukraine; materials available in six languages were distributed at refugee assistance centers, government offices, and online. The government granted housing subsidies to facilities and private citizens providing accommodations for Ukrainian refugees. However, the government reduced the provision of housing subsidies for Ukrainian refugees from 120 days to 60 days after first receiving temporary accommodations; while this did not apply to certain groups—including children under the age of five, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities, these changes may have increased refugees’ vulnerability to trafficking. Additionally, there were reports of some private citizens who received a subsidy to house refugees asking refugees for additional payments or soliciting sex in exchange for accommodation.

The law prohibited labor recruiters from charging worker-paid recruitment fees and required employment agencies to register with the government; however, the government did not report efforts to monitor or investigate agencies for fraudulent recruitment practices. Experts reported the government’s oversight of recruitment agencies employing foreign workers, particularly refugees from Ukraine, was inadequate. Foreign workers could change employment without requiring prior approval from the government. Lack of awareness of workers’ rights, availability of services, language barriers, and fear of immigration officials continued to prevent some foreign victims from seeking assistance from authorities. The government reported training labor inspectors on identifying trafficking crimes. However, GRETA reported labor inspectors lacked clear guidance and training on identifying and handling trafficking cases. Labor inspectors reported referring two potential trafficking cases to law enforcement for the first time in years. Law enforcement and labor inspectors participated in international joint action days and conducted joint inspections, but the government did not report identifying any trafficking victims during these joint inspections for the eighth consecutive year. However, GRETA noted joint inspections tended to focus on immigration enforcement rather than taking a victim-centered approach to identify and assist potential

trafficking victims, and it urged the government to ensure separation between immigration enforcement and labor inspectorate roles. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

Trafficking affects all communities. This section summarizes government and civil society reporting on the nature and scope of trafficking over the past five years. Human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Slovakia, and traffickers exploit victims from Slovakia abroad. Experts report internal trafficking and cases involving child victims are increasing. Traffickers exploit Roma, children (especially those in welfare systems or aging out of such systems), undocumented migrants, asylum-seekers, persons with mental health conditions, and persons experiencing homelessness in Slovakia. Slovak women of Roma descent are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking. Roma girls are vulnerable to forced “traditional” Roma marriages, which often include the transfer of a girl who is subjected to forced or coerced domestic service while in the care of her new “husband.” Children in institutional care and government-run residential “re-education” facilities housing disadvantaged children and juvenile offenders are vulnerable to trafficking; a January 2024 Prosecutor General’s Office report on “re-education” facilities noted poor living conditions, a lack of access to psychological support, physical abuse by staff, and reports of children conducting unpaid work. Traffickers also exploit children who leave institutional care facilities and lack family or support structures in sex and labor trafficking. Traffickers transport Roma girls to the United Kingdom for sham marriages for the purpose of sex trafficking or forced labor. In some cases, parents of Slovak Roma children exploit their children in forced criminal activity in the UK. Traffickers force Slovak men, women, and children of Roma descent and Slovaks with disabilities and mental health conditions to beg throughout Western Europe. Traffickers exploit Slovak men and women in labor trafficking in agriculture, manufacturing, and construction in Western Europe, increasingly in German-speaking countries. Traffickers exploit Slovak women in sex trafficking in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, the UK, and other European countries.

Traffickers exploit foreign workers – especially from non-EU countries, undocumented migrants, and asylum-seekers in forced labor in Slovakia; migrant workers in manufacturing, automotives, construction, hospitality, agricultural, and administrative services are especially vulnerable. Temporary workers from non-EU European countries, recruited for the manufacturing and construction industries, are vulnerable to labor trafficking. NGOs report adults from the Balkans and Asia are vulnerable to forced labor in Slovakia and may be unable or afraid to seek assistance from authorities. Traffickers exploit women from Southeast Asia in sex trafficking and forced labor in domestic service, restaurants, massage parlors, or spas. Ukrainian migrant workers are also vulnerable to trafficking. As of March 2025, more than 164,000 Ukrainian refugees, predominantly women and children, registered for temporary protection in Slovakia; this population remains vulnerable to trafficking.