

2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Slovenia

SLOVENIA (Tier 1)

The Government of Slovenia fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government made key achievements to do so during the reporting period; therefore, Slovenia was upgraded to Tier 1. These achievements included the government convicting traffickers for the first time in four years. Officials investigated more trafficking cases, and prosecuted labor trafficking crimes for the first time in four years. The government provided extensive anti-trafficking training to law enforcement officials, partnered with an international organization to draft procedures to identify trafficking victims among unaccompanied minors, and adopted an updated 2025-2026 NAP. Although the government meets the minimum standards, it identified fewer victims and initiated fewer prosecutions. Authorities regularly investigated and prosecuted trafficking crimes under non-trafficking statutes that carried lesser penalties, which weakened deterrence. The government did not identify child victims or victims among asylum-seekers, despite the risk of trafficking to these groups.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking crimes and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers.
- Proactively identify victims by screening for trafficking indicators among vulnerable populations, including children, asylum-seekers, males, and victims of labor trafficking, and refer all victims to care.
- Ensure adequate resources and staffing at reception centers to screen for trafficking indicators and identify trafficking victims among asylum-seekers.
- Ensure labor trafficking is investigated and prosecuted as a trafficking crime carrying sufficiently stringent penalties.
- Amend the definition of trafficking under Slovenian law to align more closely with the definition under international law.
- Increase the availability and quality of protection services for child trafficking victims, including by establishing a specialized accommodation center for child victims of trafficking.
- Provide training to all front-line officials, including labor inspectors, on labor trafficking victim identification and consider a partnership with NGOs on the same.
- Prioritize investigation and prosecution of labor traffickers and improve coordination between labor inspectors and police.
- Consistently enforce strong regulations and oversight of labor recruitment companies, enforce the elimination of recruitment fees charged to migrant workers and ensure any recruitment fees are paid by employers, and hold fraudulent labor recruiters criminally accountable.
- Train judges and prosecutors on human trafficking, with an emphasis on the use of non-physical means in trafficking crimes, such as fraud or psychological coercion.
- Increase efforts of prosecutors to systematically request restitution for victims in criminal trials, including for EU and non-EU citizen victims, and increase victim access to the state fund for crime victims.

PROSECUTION

The government increased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts.

Article 113 of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties ranging from one to 10 years' imprisonment for offenses involving an adult victim and three to 15 years' imprisonment for those involving a child victim or other aggravating factors. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape. However, inconsistent with the definition of trafficking under international law, Article 113 established the use of force, fraud, or coercion as an aggravating factor rather than an essential element of the crime. Article 175 of the criminal code, which criminalized "abuse of prostitution," could also be used to prosecute sex trafficking crimes. However, it prescribed penalties of three months to five years' imprisonment for crimes involving adult victims, and one to 10 year's imprisonment for crimes involving child victims; these penalties were lower than those available under Article 113.

Police investigated 43 potential trafficking cases in 2024, compared with 36 investigations in 2023. Prosecutors initiated criminal proceedings against 11 suspected traffickers and two legal entities under Article 113, compared with prosecutions initiated against 16 suspected traffickers and two legal entities under Article 113 in 2023. The government also reported prosecuting three defendants under Article 175. For the first time in four years, the government prosecuted suspects for labor trafficking. The government convicted one trafficker for labor trafficking under Article 113, and three traffickers under Article 175 – the first convictions in four years. The judges sentenced three traffickers under Article 175 to one year or more in prison; however, they sentenced one trafficker under Article 113 to a suspended sentence of three years and one month with a fine, which did not serve to deter the crime or adequately reflect the nature of the crime. The government did not report any prosecutions or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking.

While the government did not have a specialized anti-trafficking investigation unit, eight police districts had at least one officer responsible for coordinating trafficking investigations, creating a de facto nationwide coordination network. Observers reported no prosecutors exclusively specialized in trafficking cases. Several NGOs noted poor coordination between labor inspectors and police, potentially hindering the identification of labor trafficking cases. NGOs assessed authorities pursued potential labor trafficking cases as administrative labor code violations, resulting in lesser penalties and little deterrence. Government officials reported difficulty prosecuting cases under Article 113 due to the high burden of proof and initiated a review of Article 113 which remained ongoing this reporting period. Authorities sometimes failed to recognize sex trafficking victims as such due to a lack of understanding of non-physical forms of coercion, and prosecutors sometimes pursued such cases under Article 175 for "abuse of prostitution," which carried lesser penalties than Article 113. GRETA noted judges may take a narrow view of what constitutes human trafficking, for example, by requiring evidence of physical violence. The government provided extensive training for police, prosecutors, investigators, labor inspectors, consulate staff, and other officials on various topics, including labor trafficking, investigative techniques, non-physical forms of coercion, victim identification, supply chains, and unaccompanied minors. Observers reported the need for increased training on investigations of online platforms.

The government maintained police attachés in Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, North Macedonia, and Serbia to assist in coordination of international cases. The government, with other EU member states and EUROPOL, took part in several large-scale coordinated actions on human trafficking, including on online-enabled human trafficking and labor exploitation. The prosecutor's office continued coordination with the Government of Greece and the EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation on an alleged labor trafficking case from 2019 involving a Greek diplomat in Slovenia; the case remained ongoing at the close of the reporting period.

PROTECTION

The government maintained victim protection efforts.

In 2024, the government identified 20 confirmed victims (17 for sex trafficking, three for forced labor) and 37 potential victims compared with 24 confirmed victims and 60 potential victims in

2023. Of the 20 confirmed victims, victims were from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Columbia, Serbia, and Pakistan. For the first time in three years, the government formally identified labor trafficking victims. Law enforcement entities did not engage in consistent proactive victim identification efforts in some communities highly vulnerable to trafficking. Asylum centers and a partially Ministry of Interior (MOI)-funded NGO continued to screen migrants and asylum-seekers for trafficking indicators; however, the government did not report identifying any trafficking victims among these vulnerable populations for at least six consecutive years.

Government officials continued to utilize the National Manual for Identification of Victims of Trafficking in Persons. In 2025, police signed a protocol between social workers and law enforcement to cooperate on potential trafficking cases involving unaccompanied minors. The MOI, with an international organization, drafted SOPs for identifying unaccompanied minors as trafficking victims. While government officials and civil society could “detect” trafficking victims, only police could formally identify victims, and the government required formal identification by police for victims to receive access to long-term care. The majority of victims continued to be proactively identified by police. Victims could request interviews with NGOs before meeting with law enforcement, and NGOs could accompany victims to interactions with law enforcement. Once a victim was identified, government regulations required police to refer victims to one of two government-funded NGOs that had formal cooperation agreements with the government to ensure adequate provision of care to victims. NGOs noted continued strong cooperation with police on the identification of sex trafficking victims; however, authorities did not report cooperating with such NGOs in similar operations to identify labor trafficking victims.

The government referred and provided assistance to nine victims; the government did not report providing services to the other 11 victims identified in 2024. Six victims entered the government-funded crisis housing program, while five victims remained in the safe accommodation program from prior years. This compared with seven victims newly assisted in the crisis housing and safe accommodation programs in the previous reporting period. Three new victims entered the reintegration program, which offers psycho-social care, counseling, help and support in arranging documents, and job training and placement. The government allocated €135,00 (\$140,479) for housing victims in 2024, compared with €136,000 (\$141,519) in 2023. As part of this, the MOI allocated €50,000 (\$52,029) to a reintegration program. The government continued to fund two NGOs providing victims trafficking-specific crisis support and safe housing. Both NGOs were among a network of organizations providing services including counseling, medical care, psycho-social care, legal representation during investigations and court proceedings, and filing of documentation for residency status. The law allowed non-EU foreign victims a 90-day reflection period during which they could remain in Slovenia while recovering and considering whether to cooperate with law enforcement in investigations. All victims, citizens and foreign nationals, could receive crisis housing for a maximum of 30 days, after which they could enter safe accommodations for 60 days regardless of cooperation with law enforcement. Officials prepared individual assistance and protection programs for victims admitted into the safe accommodation program. After 90 days, to continue to receive shelter and long-term care, the law required victims receive a temporary residence permit based on either law enforcement cooperation in criminal proceedings or qualification under the “personal circumstances” amendment. A temporary residence permit for “personal circumstances” could be issued for up to one year, with an option for a one-year extension. Victims were not permitted to work during the 90-day reflection period; however, they were eligible for employment once they received a temporary residence permit. Victims cooperating in criminal proceedings could temporarily stay for 180 days or longer, if needed, for the trial of a trafficker, but had limited options to extend their stay after the conclusion of criminal proceedings. The government did not report issuing any temporary residence permits to trafficking victims.

Slovenian and foreign victims had access to the same protection services and had free movement in and out of shelters. The government, along with a foreign government, previously funded a children’s facility and conducted welfare assessments, and child-friendly criminal justice procedures for unaccompanied children and child victims of abuse. NGOs and GRETA urged the government to establish a specialized shelter for child trafficking victims to ensure their access to safe accommodation. The government did not report identifying or providing services to any child

victims in 2024. Observers reported the government under-identified child trafficking victims as a survey noted traffickers exploited children in sex and labor trafficking, including in exchange for drugs, cash, food, or other material benefit. Observers reported the government placed two potential child victims in a detention center without screening them for trafficking indicators.

Victims participating in criminal pretrial and criminal proceedings had a right to interpretation services and a protective escort, although the government did not report how many victims received these services. All victims who entered the government's crisis and safe accommodation program could access legal aid; however, GRETA noted, in practice, victims relied on NGOs for legal assistance. Under the witness protection act, victims could provide testimony via video or written statements and receive secure transport from accommodations to the courts, and courts kept victim identities confidential. The government allowed asylum-seekers to legally work three months after arriving to Slovenia and translated contracts into the applicants' languages – which likely decreased asylum-seekers' vulnerability to labor trafficking. NGOs previously reported there was an insufficient number of professional interpreters trained to translate the asylum intake proceedings.

Slovenian law did not have an explicit non-punishment provision to ensure victims were not penalized for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. The law allowed the right to apply for compensation to EU citizens and third country national victims of crime, including trafficking victims. The government did not award compensation to any victims. In addition, prosecutors did not request restitution for any victims in criminal proceedings. NGOs urged prosecutors to systematically request restitution for victims at criminal trials. All victims could seek damages by filing a civil suit, although most victims did not pursue compensation because of legal costs and potential re-traumatization associated with additional court proceedings. Upon government seizure of a trafficker's assets, victims could file a claim for restitution or damages; however, if the victim failed to file the claim, the trafficker's assets were subsumed into the government's budget.

PREVENTION

The government maintained prevention efforts.

The MOI's national coordinator for countering trafficking in persons continued to lead the Interdepartmental Working Group (IWG). The IWG included NGO, police, and MOI representatives and met six times, including two meetings to specifically discuss strategies to identify child and asylum-seeking victims. The MOI's Anti-Trafficking Service Office continued to provide comprehensive support for investigators and victim service providers. In January 2025, the government adopted an updated 2025-2026 NAP. The government provided €10,000 (\$10,406) for prevention efforts, including awareness raising projects in 2024, the same amount as in 2023. The government contributed €30,000 (\$31,217) to a program focused on awareness raising for asylum-seekers on the risks of human trafficking. The government, independently and in cooperation with NGOs, conducted awareness campaigns on sex trafficking, and the MOI continued to employ one dedicated staff member to raise awareness among children and adolescents by continuously providing workshops held in all primary and secondary schools. In 2024, the government funded research on legislation and judicial practices and began analyzing final judgments in trafficking cases over ten years to collate a body of case law, but did not publish any findings by the end of the reporting period. The government maintained a website which raised awareness of forced labor and labor exploitation and provided a portal for anonymous reporting of potential trafficking. Police reported receiving 78 reports of suspected trafficking. The government continued to fund at least one NGO hotline, available in several languages, offering assistance to domestic violence and trafficking victims; the hotlines did not report the total number of trafficking-related calls received.

Since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, Slovenia extended temporary protection status to more than 9,000 Ukrainian refugees, which provided access to social benefits, education, and work permits. The government, in partnership with NGOs, continued prevention efforts to mitigate

trafficking risks among Ukrainian refugees. In 2024, authorities reported identifying five potential sex trafficking victims from Ukraine.

Slovenian law prohibited contract switching and the charging of placement or recruitment fees to workers, as well as passport and wage withholding. Migrant workers could change employers without delay or prior government permission, which may have decreased their vulnerability to trafficking. However, while the law required employers to pay recruitment fees, in practice, NGOs assessed the government did not effectively enforce the law and employers frequently passed these fees on to workers through salary deductions and other means. Authorities often prosecuted and shut down the legal entity or company rather than prosecuting specific perpetrators, allowing perpetrators to subsequently establish companies with a new name and continue to exploit victims in labor trafficking. Labor inspectors did not report how many labor inspections they conducted in 2024; labor inspectors did not have the authority to formally identify trafficking victims and did not report identifying any potential victims of labor trafficking or referring potential cases for further investigation. The government prohibited public procurement of goods from sources with evidence of forced labor. The government maintained an anti-trafficking agreement with the Republic of North Macedonia. The government maintained a network for national anti-trafficking coordinators in the Western Balkans region. The government conducted awareness raising campaigns 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 Slovenia, and, to a lesser extent traffickers exploit victims from Slovenia abroad. Slovenes as well as foreign workers and migrants from countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, the Philippines, India, Türkiye, Bangladesh, China, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine are vulnerable to labor trafficking, including forced begging, domestic servitude, or in a variety of sectors such as construction, agriculture, transportation, carwashes, and hospitality. Traffickers utilize online platforms to recruit and exploit trafficking victims. Sometimes these individuals are in transit to Western Europe, where traffickers exploit them in forced labor. Temporary work agencies exploit workers, which sometimes amounts to labor trafficking. Asylum-seekers remain particularly at risk of trafficking in Slovenia. Ukrainian refugees, predominantly women and children, fleeing the Russia-Ukraine war, remain vulnerable to trafficking. Traffickers exploit women and children from Slovenia and Eastern Europe, Western Balkan, Southeast Asian, and Latin American countries in sex trafficking in Slovenia. Roma are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, especially forced begging and forced criminality, in Slovenia.