

2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: France

France (Tier 1)

The Government of France fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore France remained on Tier 1. These efforts included opening a new children's shelter that could accommodate trafficking victims and adopting a national action plan (NAP) for children exploited in commercial sex, including child sex trafficking. The government established a new unit of eight investigators specializing in the exploitation of children in commercial sex, which included child sex trafficking, as well as a cooperation mechanism for victim assistance on police operations with a civil society network. Although the government meets the minimum standards, it investigated and prosecuted fewer suspects and convicted fewer traffickers compared with the prior year. The government continued to lack a national victim identification and referral mechanism (NRM) to ensure proactive referral to care, and it did not increase its efforts to address labor trafficking. The government continued to lack legal safeguards to protect victims from prosecution for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit and did not report awarding compensation or restitution to any victims in 2021. Police continued to arrest and prosecute child victims of forced begging and forced criminality and deport undocumented migrants from Mayotte, an overseas French department, without screening for trafficking indicators. Funding for victim assistance decreased compared with the prior year and was generally insufficient. Furthermore, the government again did not take effective steps to address the 3,000 to 4,000 unaccompanied Comorian children at risk for sex and labor trafficking in Mayotte. Furthermore, the government did not sufficiently disaggregate data between trafficking and other forms of exploitation or between sex and labor trafficking, which resulted in unclear trends and statistics.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Coordinate and centralize the timely collection of trafficking data across the government, including sufficiently disaggregating data between trafficking and other forms of exploitation, as well as between sex and labor trafficking.
- Create an NRM for all forms of trafficking.
- Increase efforts to proactively identify and provide assistance to trafficking victims in all regions and departments, both domestic and overseas, including for vulnerable populations like asylum-seekers.
- Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers and sentence those convicted to significant prison terms.
- Increase funding and resources specifically for anti-trafficking coordination and victim assistance, including adequate funding for NGOs providing assistance.
- Increase interagency coordination to investigate and prevent labor trafficking.
- Ensure adequate training for law enforcement investigators on techniques to dismantle human trafficking organizations operating on the internet and other technologies.
- Systematically train all front-line officials, including labor inspectors, police, prosecutors, and judges, on a victim-centered approach to investigating and prosecuting labor trafficking and identifying victims.
- Vigorously investigate labor trafficking and prosecute these crimes as trafficking rather than labor code violations.
- Allow formal victim identification without requiring cooperation or interaction with law enforcement and by entities other than law enforcement officials, including by civil society, social workers, and healthcare professionals.

- Consistently screen all migrants for trafficking indicators, including unaccompanied children in Mayotte.
- Enact a legal provision on the non-punishment of victims to ensure that trafficking victims are not inappropriately penalized for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit.
- Implement the second NAP and include a defined timeframe and dedicated budget, as well as other recommendations from the national rapporteur.
- Provide adequate resources for child victims, including improving the quality of shelters and specialized assistance, especially of forced begging and criminality.
- Increase trafficking survivor access to damages and restitution and increase prosecutor's efforts to systematically request restitution for survivors during criminal trials, including for victims lacking legal status.
- Offer the reflection period to all victims, including migrants and victims of forced begging and criminality.
- Strengthen international law enforcement cooperation to prevent and investigate child sex tourism and continue to prosecute and convict perpetrators.
- Ensure sufficient resources are provided to the national rapporteur and the anti-trafficking coordinator.
- Establish a witness protection program trafficking victims can use and improve assistance provided during court trials.
- Increase worker protections by prohibiting recruitment or placement fees charged to workers by labor recruiters and ensuring employers pay any recruitment fees.
- Establish adequate accommodation centers dedicated to adult male trafficking victims that take into account the specific needs of these trafficking victims.
- Increase survivor engagement, including by establishing accessible mechanisms for receiving and providing compensation for survivor input when forming policies, programs, and trainings.
- Increase efforts to pursue financial crime investigations in tandem with human trafficking cases.

PROSECUTION

The government decreased law enforcement efforts. Article 225-4 of the penal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious offenses, such as rape. The increased occurrence of other crimes, notably domestic violence, during the pandemic lockdowns caused a shift in government priorities and resources away from human trafficking—although NGOs asserted the government had prioritized other crimes for many years prior to the pandemic.

The government did not report comprehensive and disaggregated law enforcement data but provided information from all French departments and territories, including those overseas. The government reported conducting 127 investigations ("procedures") related to human trafficking in 2020, a decrease compared with 235 in 2019 and 196 in 2018. In 2020, the government reported investigating and dismantling 53 networks involved in facilitating human trafficking and commercial sex crimes, leading to the arrests of 875 suspects; compared with 58 networks dismantled and 339 suspects identified in 2019. The government reported that pandemic-related restrictions decreased the capacity of investigators and resulted in fewer investigations, which also affected the number of prosecutions. Beginning in 2019, the government changed its methodology for reporting prosecutions, and statistics for prior years have been updated to reflect this change. The government reported prosecuting 244 trafficking suspects in 2020, the most recent year data was available, a decrease compared with 339 suspects in 2019 but similar to 252 suspects in 2018. Of the prosecutions, at least two were for labor trafficking in 2020, but the government remained without adequate data disaggregation between sex and labor trafficking for most trafficking indictments. The government reported convicting 66 traffickers in 2020, the most recent year for which data was available; a significant decrease compared with 91 in 2019 and 104 in 2018. The pandemic caused courts to shut down for two months in 2020, which delayed the processing of all cases. While the government did not report comprehensive and specific sentencing data in a format that allowed for an accurate assessment of significant sentencing, it provided a five- year average (2015-2020) of 3.4

years' imprisonment with 78 percent of convicted traffickers serving some amount of prison time. NGOs reported that trafficking sentences were not a sufficient deterrent, especially in cases of labor trafficking.

The government did not report any new investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of officials complicit in human trafficking crimes. The National Consultative Commission for Human Rights (CNC DH), which functioned as the independent national rapporteur, urged courts to issue more consistent and stringent penalties to convicted human traffickers, and NGOs expressed concerns about the inconsistency of anti-trafficking prosecutions across the country, which could vary depending on the level of engagement of local prosecutors. In its 2022 report, GRETA noted that many investigators, prosecutors, and judges believed transnational networks or border crossing were necessary elements of human trafficking and therefore did not pursue cases without these elements as trafficking cases. Trafficking victims were not afforded the same rights and entitlements, such as residence permits and full compensation, if their cases were pursued as other crimes. GRETA expressed concern that trafficking crimes were being convicted under other statutes and urged the government to rectify this, including through further trafficking specialization for investigators, prosecutors, and judges.

7184390-374650**FRANCE00FRANCE**The government had several bodies that were responsible for investigating trafficking crimes: the Ministry of Interior's Central Office for the Suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings (OCRTEH), comprising 25 investigators, was responsible for cases of sex trafficking, and the Central Office for Combatting Illegal Labor and the Central Office for the Suppression of Irregular Migration and the Employment of Irregular Migrants were responsible for labor trafficking cases. In 2021, a new unit of eight investigators specializing in the exploitation of children in commercial sex, to include child sex trafficking, was established in Paris. The government and government-funded NGOs continued anti- trafficking training programs, both in person and virtually, some of which included training for magistrates, prosecutors, police, social workers, civil servants, and NGOs. The CNC DH and several other government bodies raised concerns regarding the lack of adequate training for many police investigators on techniques to dismantle human trafficking organizations that operated on the internet and other technologies—a trend that rapidly increased during the pandemic. During the reporting period, the government provided training to investigators to increase efforts to dismantle trafficking on the internet. A June 2020 government report asserted law enforcement also lacked sufficient awareness of trafficking organizations that exploited male and transgender victims, despite the extreme violence often used by these criminal organizations; however, the government did not report whether additional training was provided to law enforcement. Furthermore, an NGO asserted police sometimes recorded sex and labor trafficking complaints as lesser crimes that did not necessitate an official investigation or failed to register the complaint at all. NGOs also observed that judges and prosecutors were sometimes reluctant to formally certify forced labor victims because of the protections subsequently granted to them and recommended judges and prosecutors take additional targeted training, which the government reported providing.

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In 2021, the government collaborated in international investigations, including with EUROPOL, INTERPOL, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Italy, Madagascar, Moldova, Paraguay, Romania, and Spain, which resulted in the identification of at least 697 victims and 143 trafficking suspects both in France and cooperating countries. To foster increased cooperation with civil society, in 2021 the government proposed and, in collaboration with Ac-Se—an anti-trafficking NGO-network—established a

cooperation mechanism to inform, assist, and protect victims of trafficking by including Ac-Se in several police operations throughout the year. This close coordination with civil society and multidisciplinary approach resulted in seamless assistance to trafficking victims identified during operations and allowed NGOs to accompany victims to interviews with law enforcement and to ensure local shelters were prepared ahead of time to receive victims. French law enforcement had 15 joint investigation teams related to human trafficking to facilitate international law enforcement cooperation, including with Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, and Spain, and maintained a police liaison in Nigeria. However, due to the inaction of local French law enforcement on a forced labor case involving a Comorian trafficking victim in Mayotte, an overseas French Department, Comorian law enforcement noted difficulty cooperating with French law enforcement; Comorian law enforcement reported that the trafficking victim was ultimately deported from Mayotte to Comoros and that officials requested extradition of the suspect.

PROTECTION

The government maintained insufficient victim identification and protection efforts, and victim identification decreased compared with the prior year. The government remained without an NRM and comprehensive, centralized, or sufficiently disaggregated data, making victim identification difficult to assess. The government did not adequately disaggregate data between trafficking and other forms of exploitation or between sex and labor trafficking. In 2020, police identified 197 trafficking victims, including at least five forced labor victims; a decrease compared with 235 in 2019 but more than 187 in 2018. In 2020, police also identified 786 victims of commercial sexual exploitation, some of whom may have been victims of sex trafficking; of these victims, 493 were French, and 217 were children. This compared with 785 victims of commercial sexual exploitation in 2019 (187 children) and 849 in 2018. Gaps in victim identification remained, and the government did not report the specific number of French nationals, children, asylum-seeking, or labor trafficking victims it identified in 2020; however, French nationals tended to be the majority of identified victims in prior years, and identified child victims continued to increase. Experts, NGOs, and GRETA expressed concerns regarding the government's national statistics on victim identification and asserted the scale of human trafficking in France was likely much higher. Victim protection data included all French departments and territories, including those overseas. Pandemic lockdowns led to the decreased use of bars and nightclubs and the increased use of private locations and the internet as venues for exploitation, which exacerbated vulnerabilities for sex trafficking victims and decreased victim visibility to authorities. The pandemic also exacerbated vulnerabilities for labor trafficking victims through increased insolation of migrant and domestic workers, which complicated detection by officials and NGOs.

The government remained without an NRM to ensure uniform and equal treatment of victims; however, the government established an interdepartmental working group, which included NGOs, that submitted a draft mechanism for review in January 2022. In its 2013, 2017, and 2022 reports, GRETA urged the government to adopt an NRM. Most ministries and regions had formal procedures for identifying victims, including a new mechanism in Marseille in 2021, and authorities continued to use an NGO- run referral mechanism. GRETA noted the government remained without a formal identification process for victims who were nationals of France or a European Economic Area country. Experts, NGOs, and the national rapporteur reported gaps in authorities' proactive victim identification efforts persisted; they called for improving victim identification as a top priority in the NAP. The government assumes the majority of individuals in commercial sex and all foreign adult individuals in commercial sex are trafficking victims, and the government systematically screens this population for trafficking indicators. However, this assumption could have led to a misunderstanding of sex trafficking amongst front-line officials and conflation with commercial sex. Authorities also often mischaracterized victims of forced criminality as delinquents or illegal workers and consequently excluded them from assistance. Victims of forced labor experienced difficulty in formal recognition as victims. Given the significant increase in children exploited in commercial sex in the past few years, which NGOs estimated to be between 10,000 and 15,000 predominantly French girls, in April 2021, the national rapporteur publicly urged the government to adopt a clear criminal policy against the sexual exploitation of children. The rapporteur recommended improving the identification of child trafficking victims by increasing training and data collection, targeting online platforms, and increasing national awareness campaigns.

The government provided funding for the Ac-Se system, an NGO- managed network of 88 partners, including 58 reception facilities, five NGOs that act as both reception facilities and specialized service providers, two combined reception and advice centers, one host family, and 22 specialized service providers assisting adult victims of sex and labor trafficking. The Ac-Se NGO network provided victims with shelter, legal, medical, and psychological services. However, GRETA reported that the network did not cover the entire country or overseas French Departments. Both police and NGOs referred victims to Ac-Se. However, only the police, gendarmerie, and judiciary could formally identify victims; formal identification required victims to cooperate with law enforcement. NGOs reported formal official recognition as a trafficking victim was difficult to achieve and such status offered additional protections and in practice was necessary to obtain asylum or a residence permit, residency papers, healthcare, and housing. While labor inspectors could refer potential cases of labor trafficking to law enforcement authorities, in its 2022 report, GRETA recommended authorizing labor inspectors to formally identify victims as well. The CNCDH urged the government to allow formal victim identification without a requirement to cooperate with law enforcement and also by entities other than law enforcement, including by civil society, healthcare workers, and social workers; however, the government did not report efforts to allow other entities to formally identify victims during the reporting period. The government provided Ac-Se with €523,000 (\$592,970) in 2021, in addition to an unreported amount of funding it dispersed to individual NGOs supporting the Ac-Se network. This amount was a decrease compared with €797,000 (\$903,630) in 2020. NGOs criticized the amount of funding generally provided by the government to all NGOs for victim assistance as insufficient and asserted the government often funded anti-trafficking efforts from the women's rights budget with little transparency into how much it allocated specifically to human trafficking. NGOs also raised concerns pertaining to the lack of a dedicated budget allocation to NGOs providing victim assistance to trafficking victims, forcing NGOs to rely on donations from private entities. In its 2022 report, GRETA urged the government to increase funding and resources dedicated to combatting human trafficking. In addition to victims identified by the government, NGOs reported identifying at least 6,457 human trafficking victims and assisting 2,573 in 2020, but many of the NGOs did not receive government funding, and the government did not provide further details. While only partial data on victim assistance was available, government-funded NGOs reported assisting a total of 260 trafficking victims, including shelter for 48 victims and nine child dependents in 2020; this was similar to 264 in 2019, including shelter for 45 victims and 12 child dependents.

Victims were entitled to a 30-day reflection period during which they could decide whether to lodge a complaint or participate in criminal proceedings against a trafficker; however, some authorities were not familiar with the reflection period and did not offer it. Although formal victim identification required law enforcement cooperation, victims who chose not to cooperate could still receive free medical attention. Not all trafficking victims were eligible for admittance into Ac-Se's shelter program, unless they were in immediate danger or in a highly vulnerable situation that required geographic relocation; NGOs observed that migrants without legal status often struggled to find housing, which increased their risk of exploitation. The central and municipal governments continued to partially fund the operation of a shelter in Paris that could accommodate 12 victims, as well as a small number of emergency apartments external to the Ac-Se system. There were no accommodation centers dedicated to adult male trafficking victims, but communal homes or homeless shelters were sometimes used; however, these accommodations did not take into account the specific needs of trafficking victims. Police referred child trafficking victims to the Child Welfare Services (ASE) system, which provided the children with shelter. In October 2021, the government funded an NGO-run shelter for up to 12 children, which could include trafficking victims; the shelter offered health, psychological, and judicial support. Authorities noted a significant increase in children exploited in commercial sex over the past five years, with traffickers targeting girls in government children's shelters. GRETA and the national rapporteur reported a lack of adequate resources for the special assistance needs of child trafficking victims, especially considering the increase in victims in recent years. GRETA noted reports that unaccompanied children at airports or immigration reception centers sometimes disappear or are picked up by traffickers. While GRETA noted improved assistance to victims in recent years, it expressed concern regarding the persistent insufficient number of shelters and funding for NGOs who provided victims with care.

The law entitled trafficking victims to free legal aid, subject to meeting a number of requirements, and victims who did not meet the requirements for legal aid could receive assistance from NGOs; however, in its 2022 report, GRETA asserted lawyers were often unfamiliar with trafficking and urged the government to ensure all victims, regardless of the victim's immigration status, had systematic

early access to legal assistance. GRETA expressed concern legal aid was unavailable for undocumented migrants and may have restricted the rights of some victims to access justice. Local governments provided French language classes to victims, and some victims could qualify for subsidized housing and job training programs, but the government did not report the number of victims provided with these benefits. The national employment agency provided some foreign victims with an initial stipend of €350 (\$397) a month but did not report the number of victims that received this stipend during the reporting period; civil society organizations reported the conditions for being granted a stipend were not uniform and varied by region. Judges heard criminal trials for trafficking in private at the victim's request, and remote testimony, including by video, was also available. Although NGOs sometimes provided psychological support to victims, the government did not fund this service, and NGOs and GRETA asserted psychological counseling to victims was insufficient. However, victims usually had access to a psychologist during court proceedings, which was a legal requirement for children. The government took additional precautions to prevent re-traumatizing children: the law limited the interview of child victims to one time, law enforcement used child-friendly procedures, and the government had specialized law enforcement officials and courts for child victims. The government had specialized private victim interview rooms for children, but GRETA and NGOs reported law enforcement was often unaware of them or did not use them. NGOs and GRETA noted, despite the legal entitlement, the government did not consistently provide interpreters to victims during trials or information in a language they understood, the responsibility of which would then pass to NGOs, often without available government funding. In its 2022 report, GRETA noted front line officials were not adequately trained on human trafficking and could not inform trafficking victims of their rights or trafficking procedures, despite the availability of a standard form on victim rights; GRETA urged the government to address these gaps. Law enforcement did not have a witness protection program that trafficking victims could use, which may have decreased the willingness of some victims to cooperate with law enforcement. The CNCDH urged the government to improve assistance provided to victims during their trials, but the government did not report making efforts to do so. In its 2022 report, GRETA urged the government to ensure trafficking victims could access the witness protection program and increase their usage of audio-visual equipment to interview victims and specialized interview rooms, especially for children.

The government issued permits only when victims cooperated with police investigations or enrolled in the government's reintegration program, which required ceasing engagement in commercial sex and often required paperwork victims could not obtain. Authorities generally offered permanent residency to trafficking victims following a successful conviction of their trafficker. The government reported issuing or renewing 293 temporary residence permits (313 in 2019) and 25 permanent residence permits (41 in 2019) to trafficking victims in 2020, the most recent year data was available. In its 2022 report, GRETA noted that while trafficking survivors with residence permits were permitted to work, they often faced language barriers, lacked necessary training, and were in need of further psychological assistance due to trauma suffered; GRETA urged the government to address these issues. Trafficking victims were also eligible for international protection under refugee status or subsidiary protection status in cases where victims had a credible fear of retaliation, including from public authorities in their country of origin, if returned; however, the government did not report the number of victims granted such status. The government offered a specialized support program for asylum-seekers who were also victims of violence or human trafficking, but it required the victims to be formally recognized; the program provided secure lodging, psychological support, and a path to request asylum, but the government did not report how many asylum-seekers utilized this program during the reporting period. The government had internal guidelines to evaluate and process asylum claims on the basis of labor trafficking. GRETA and a large collective of anti-trafficking NGOs believed the new law on asylum and immigration, which eased restrictions on migrant deportation, limited victims' ability to receive temporary residence due to new time-bound restrictions on permit applications and more stringent approval criteria. In its 2022 report, GRETA cited instances where trafficking victims in the asylum system had numerous interactions with law enforcement but were never identified as a victim, as well as where NGOs had identified trafficking victims but law enforcement disagreed or deported the victim, despite the victim having lodged a complaint against the trafficker; GRETA recommended increased training on human trafficking for front-line officials.

In its 2017 and 2022 reports, GRETA expressed concern that police continued to arrest and prosecute child victims of forced begging and forced criminality without screening for trafficking indicators. In 2021, the government did not report uniformly screening undocumented migrants, who were vulnerable to trafficking, in Mayotte for trafficking indicators prior to their deportation, which could have left some trafficking victims unidentified. Of the 3,000-4,000 unaccompanied

Comorian children at risk for sex and labor trafficking in the French department of Mayotte, the government reportedly provided approximately 40 children per year with accommodation and education, though it did not report taking effective steps to address the protection needs, including medical care, shelter, or education, of the remaining 3,000 to 4,000 children.

7184390-508000**FRANCE00FRANCE**The government continued to lack comprehensive statistics on compensation, restitution, and damages awarded to trafficking victims. Trafficking victims could obtain compensation for personal injuries from the government through the commission for the compensation of victims of criminal offences (CIVI). GRETA reported that the CIVI often waited to make decisions until prosecutors made official indictments; with regard to labor trafficking, if prosecutors charged the perpetrator for a less severe labor law violation vice trafficking, victims would receive less compensation. The government did not report granting compensation to any trafficking victims for 2021, compared with seven victims from 2020 who received between €5,000 (\$5,670) and €10,000 (\$11,340) each. While not systematic or mandatory, criminal courts could order traffickers to pay restitution to victims who were citizens of France or when the act was committed on French territory, the European Economic Community (ECC), or had legal immigration status; the government did not report awarding restitution to any victims in 2021, compared with three in 2020. Victims who were citizens of France, the ECC, or had legal immigration status could also bring a civil suit against a trafficker for damages; however, authorities did not report any victims filing suits or awarding damages to any victims during the reporting period. GRETA and NGOs reported victim restitution was rare and amounts for compensation, restitution, and damages were small. GRETA reported in 2022 that even when traffickers were ordered to pay restitution or damages, victims often did not receive payment because enforcement was difficult, and traffickers often declared bankruptcy. Victims of sex trafficking may have had difficulty in claiming restitution or damages because they did not have a legal form of employment. Victims lacking legal status were ineligible for restitution or damages, potentially increasing their vulnerability to exploitation. The government did not report the amount of assets confiscated from convicted traffickers in 2020 or 2021 or whether any was awarded to victims for restitution or damages; however, in its 2022 report, GRETA highlighted that between 2017 and 2019, authorities seized €26 million (\$29.48 million) from traffickers. Victims could also receive backpay from the Labor Court, as one such victim did in 2021. In its 2022 report, GRETA urged the government to better guarantee effective access to compensation, restitution, and damages, increase training for frontline officials, and use the confiscated assets from traffickers for victims. GRETA reported that the lack of a specific provision in French law protecting victims from prosecution for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit could leave victims vulnerable to penalization, especially child victims of forced criminality and forced begging. In February 2021, the Minister of Justice requested prosecutors avoid prosecuting children for forced criminality, but this continued to leave adult victims vulnerable, and this request was not codified in the law. GRETA and NGOs expressed concern that the convictions for formally recognized trafficking victims could not be expunged, which could prevent some victims from accessing employment.

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PREVENTION

The government maintained prevention efforts. The Inter-ministerial Mission for the Protection of Women against Violence and the Fight against Human Trafficking (MIPROF) continued to coordinate government-wide efforts on anti-trafficking and the prevention of violence against women; however, NGOs and GRETA urged the government to increase personnel and resources allocated to the office. MIPROF's anti-trafficking steering committee included national, regional, and local governments, as well as NGOs; it met once during the reporting period, but NGOs noted an overall decrease in the government's engagement with NGOs. The CNCDDH continued to serve as the independent national

rapporteur for trafficking, but resources remained insufficient. The government had a NAP; however, the rapporteur criticized the plan, noting obstacles and deficiencies, including the absence of a defined timeframe or budget. Furthermore, the national rapporteur noted the action plan did not address the flaws of the first plan, which included prioritizing sex trafficking over labor trafficking, unequal efforts that varied by region, and the continued conflation of commercial sex and human trafficking by authorities. The national rapporteur recommended annual plans incorporating specific deadlines, detailed measures, monitoring indicators, separated costs, and a dedicated source of funding; however, the government did not report taking any concrete steps on these recommendations. MIPROF met with CNCDH twice during the reporting period to discuss the recommendations from the NAP. In November 2021, the government adopted a NAP specifically for children exploited in commercial sex, including child sex trafficking, with a dedicated budget of €14 million (\$15.87 million) for implementation.

The continued prioritization of sex trafficking led to insufficient efforts to combat labor trafficking, and the CNCDH recommended increased training on labor trafficking for all front-line officials, as labor trafficking was often categorized as labor code violations, undeclared work, undignified work conditions, or employing illegal migrants. The tendency for authorities to categorize labor trafficking as lesser crimes resulted in decreased deterrence. In 2022, GRETA recommended the government increase its efforts to combat labor trafficking, including by increasing labor inspections of high-risk sectors and raising awareness among migrant worker populations. The government continued to make limited efforts to raise national awareness of human trafficking; efforts included participation in an awareness campaign, launched by NGOs, to raise awareness of the sexual abuses committed against children on Mayotte. In partnership with a civil society organization, the Ministry of Economy and Finance distributed pocket-sized cards on trafficking victim identification to border police and NGOs. In early 2022, the government focused awareness raising efforts on refugees fleeing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine by establishing a website, dedicating emergency shelter for refugees, and requiring citizens to register with the government before hosting Ukrainian refugees.

The government did not report having a licensing or accreditation process for labor recruiters, and there was no law prohibiting or criminalizing recruitment companies from charging recruitment or placement fees to workers. Passport withholding, contract switching, and wage withholding were illegal, and workers could pursue legal recourse. Fraudulent labor recruitment remained a concern during the reporting period. In 2021, the government conducted 132,000 labor inspections; however, unlike prior years, the government did not report whether any potential victims were referred to police or whether any investigations were initiated as a result of the inspections. Labor inspectors lacked the authority to identify trafficking victims but could refer potential victims to police. Law enforcement, immigration guards, and labor inspectors, both domestically and in Mayotte, participated in joint inspections that focused on the agricultural sector, which resulted in the identification of at least 27 suspected traffickers and the arrest of eight, as well as the identification of at least 91 victims of trafficking in France; however, the government did not report any results from Mayotte. French law required large companies (with more than 5,000 employees) to enact due diligence measures to identify risks and prevent serious harm to human rights, including labor exploitation, by subcontractors and suppliers. In its 2022 report, GRETA encouraged increased implementation of the due diligence law. During the reporting period, prosecutors initiated an investigation into four major retailers that allegedly continued to purchase cotton from the People's Republic of China (PRC), which was potentially harvested with forced labor. The government made efforts to reduce the demand for child sex tourism by funding programs to raise awareness in airports and with tourism operators of the illegality of and penalties associated with child sex tourism, as well as requiring students to complete an awareness course on sex tourism prior to their departure abroad. For destinations with higher incidences of child sex tourism, like Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Madagascar, and the Philippines, the government included warnings on its website for travelers. The government made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex by fining approximately 1,300 purchasers of commercial sex, though efforts were inconsistent throughout the country.

The government also continued to station liaison officers and judges abroad, including in Romania, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Southeast Europe, who helped coordinate law enforcement efforts against traffickers, including a June 2021 online training for specialized Romanian prosecutors on interview

techniques for child victims of trafficking. In 2021, the government continued to fund anti-trafficking capacity-building programs across Africa's Gulf of Guinea region and victim support operations in Libya, and it helped organize and fund several international workshops on human trafficking. Ac-Se continued to operate a hotline for trafficking victims, as well as a hotline for children in abusive situations, including trafficking; however, neither hotline reported the number of trafficking-related calls received. GRETA recommended the government establish a dedicated national human trafficking hotline. The government continued to host an online platform that allowed citizens to flag inappropriate content, which led to several human trafficking investigations. The government did not provide systematic anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel, although consular officials received training on identifying forced domestic servitude. NGOs also noted there was insufficient follow-up by the government regarding domestic workers who were employed by diplomats in France and that little could be done to assist victims because of the diplomatic immunity of the trafficker. Labor inspectors continued to lack the authority to inspect private homes, thereby limiting their identification of domestic servitude.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit foreign victims, and to a limited extent, domestic victims in France. The pandemic exacerbated vulnerabilities for trafficking victims, including increasing the isolation of migrant and seasonal workers, as well as sex trafficking victims, which complicates detection by officials and NGOs. Pandemic-related closures and restrictions caused additional vulnerability for individuals in commercial sex. Sex and labor traffickers exploit foreign victims from Eastern Europe, West and North Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Authorities noted an increase in French girls as sex trafficking victims, as well as a general increase in child victims since 2016; NGOs estimate that between 10,000 and 15,000 French teenagers are victims of child sex trafficking—a significant increase compared with previous estimates of between 6,000 and 8,000. In suburban areas, there has been a sharp rise in sex traffickers known as “lover boys” coercing vulnerable girls into sex trafficking, often through a sham romantic relationship. Traffickers target girls in government-funded shelters for children. Nigerian females make up a significant portion of sex trafficking victims. During the pandemic, sex traffickers increased the usage of online platforms to recruit and exploit victims and book apartment rentals to make their illicit operations difficult to track; in 2020, government officials estimated that 87 percent of commercial sex encounters were organized online. Authorities report traffickers encourage Nigerian victims to claim asylum to obtain legal residency and facilitate their continued exploitation; French authorities have also noted trafficking victims from Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Russia, Vietnam, and Ukraine have claimed asylum for this purpose. Sex trafficking networks, controlled by Bulgarian, PRC national, French, Hungarian, Nigerian, Romanian, and South American traffickers, exploit women through debt bondage, physical force, and psychological coercion, including the invocation of voodoo and drug addiction. Nigerian gangs associated with sex trafficking and linked to the Black Axe, Arobaga Vikings, the Maphite, and the Eiye syndicate continue to grow more sophisticated, organized, and violent. PRC-national criminal networks also use as many as 400 massage parlors as fronts for the purchase of commercial sex, raising concerns about sex trafficking. The government estimates the majority of the 40,000- 50,000 individuals in commercial sex in France, about 90 percent of whom are foreign, are likely trafficking victims. Members of the LGBTQI+ community, especially from South America, are vulnerable to trafficking, and traffickers increasingly exploit transgender victims in sex trafficking. Traffickers exploit children, primarily from Romania, West and North Africa, and the Middle East, in sex trafficking in France. Traffickers often lure victims with fraudulent offers of economic opportunities and target undocumented workers already in France. French citizens sometimes engage in child sex tourism abroad. In 2022, refugees, predominantly women and children, fleeing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, are vulnerable to trafficking.

Labor trafficking most frequently occurs in domestic work, followed by construction, small commerce, agriculture, fishing, and livestock; the majority of identified labor trafficking victims are women. Expansive criminal networks force children to commit crimes; most victims are from Romania and North Africa, many of whom are addicted to controlled substances. Seasonal migrant workers are vulnerable to labor trafficking while harvesting grapes for winemakers in the Champagne region and are often hired through subcontractors using fraudulent job descriptions and wages. Traffickers exploit the large influx of unaccompanied children who have entered France in recent years. Roma and unaccompanied children in France are at risk of forced begging and forced theft. The families of Roma children are often also their traffickers. In 2020, the government found that immediate or extended family members are the traffickers for 88 percent of victims of

forced crime and forced begging; 62 percent of sex trafficking victims knew their traffickers beforehand. Traffickers exploit victims with intellectual disabilities in forced labor in agriculture and begging. The estimated 3,000-4,000 unaccompanied Comorian children on the island of Mayotte, a French department, remained at risk for labor and sex trafficking. Protection services, such as medical, shelter, and education, are not available to unaccompanied children on Mayotte, and previous efforts of the Comorian National Human Rights Commission to investigate further were denied by the French embassy in Comoros. Unaccompanied Moroccan children are vulnerable to forced begging in France. In 2020, the government, through Operation Barkhane, provided support to Malian armed groups who used and recruited child soldiers. Labor traffickers exploit women and children in domestic servitude—the most frequent case being when families exploit relatives brought from Africa to work in their households; according to a 2020 report, domestic servitude makes up approximately 10 percent of all trafficking in France. Nigerian trafficking networks use migrant and drug trafficking routes through Niger, Libya, and Italy to transport women and girls to France, where they exploit them in trafficking and debt bondage. Cuban medical professionals working in Martinique, a French department, in 2020 may have been forced to work by the Cuban government.

ecoi.net summary:

Annual report on
trafficking in persons (covering
April 2021 to March 2022)

Country:

France

Source:

[USDOS – US Department of
State](#)

Original link:

[https://www.state.gov/reports/
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