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USDOS – US Department of State (Author)

2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Switzerland

SWITZERLAND (Tier 2)

The Government of Switzerland 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 Switzerland remained on Tier 2. These efforts included conducting awareness campaigns, identifying asylum-seeking victims and child victims, training border officials, labor inspectors, police, and prosecutors on trafficking. The federal government allocated more funding to NGOs for general prevention and protection efforts. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government lacked consistent and uniform victim identification and access to adequate care across the country, and it identified fewer victims in 2022, the most recent year for which data was available. The government did not report how many victims it assisted or referred to care, and services for child, victims whose exploitation occurred abroad, and male trafficking victims remained inadequate in some cantons. The government convicted fewer traffickers in 2022, the most recent year for which data was available. Lenient sentencing, resulting in the majority of traffickers receiving fully suspended sentences or sentences of less than one year imprisonment, continued to undercut efforts to hold traffickers accountable, weakened deterrence, created potential security and safety concerns for victims, and was not reflective of the seriousness of the crime. Law enforcement efforts related to labor trafficking remained low.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking crimes, including labor trafficking, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which

should involve significant prison terms. * Improve sentencing practices by training judges about the severity of trafficking crimes and the importance of applying the stringent penalties available under the trafficking law. * Consistently train front-line officials on the proactive identification of victims and their referral to services. * Increase access to specialized services for all victims, including labor trafficking victims, asylum-seekers, male, child, and transgender victims. * Ensure victims, including those exploited outside of Switzerland, have access to the full range of victim protections and services, irrespective of whether they participate in criminal proceedings. * Increase coordination of anti-trafficking efforts across all cantons. * Ensure every canton has a cantonal roundtable, a defined process to formally identify victims, and adequate protection services available for all victims. * Coordinate and centralize the collection of trafficking data across the government, including from cantons, and sufficiently disaggregate data between trafficking and other forms of exploitation, as well as between sex and labor trafficking. * Amend the anti-trafficking provision of the criminal code to include force, fraud, or coercion as an essential element of the crime consistent with the international law definition and ensure the criminal code clearly defines labor exploitation. * Provide sufficient personnel and funding to specialized anti-trafficking police units and the Specialist Unit Against the Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (FSMM) to coordinate national anti-trafficking efforts. * Increase awareness of and trafficking survivor access to compensation and increase prosecutors' efforts to systematically request restitution for survivors during criminal trials. * Provide sufficient personnel to courts to reduce the judicial backlog for trafficking cases. * Ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts, including immigration offenses, committed as a direct result of being trafficked. * Strengthen international law enforcement cooperation to prevent and investigate extraterritorial commercial child sexual exploitation and abuse. * Appoint a national rapporteur to provide independent review of government anti-trafficking efforts. * Consistently enforce strong regulations and oversight of labor recruitment companies, including by codifying in law the elimination of recruitment fees charged to migrant workers and holding fraudulent labor recruiters criminally accountable.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained law enforcement efforts. Article 182 of the penal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to life imprisonment and/or a fine; the penalties included prison sentences of no less than one year for crimes involving a child victim and those where the trafficker acted for commercial gain. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as kidnapping. Inconsistent with the definition of trafficking under international law, Article 182 does not include a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion as an essential element of the

crime. NGOs stated the lack of an explicit legal definition for labor exploitation under Article 182 complicated labor trafficking investigations and prosecutions and limited data collection necessary for prevention efforts.

In 2022, the most recent year for which data was available, cantonal authorities reported investigating 59 cases with 51 suspects under Article 182, compared with 46 cases and 57 suspects in 2021 and 55 cases with 61 suspects in 2020. In 2022, the government recorded 45 offenses related to sex trafficking and 18 for labor trafficking; however, the number of offenses did not directly correlate to the number of suspects or cases under investigation as one suspect could commit multiple offenses. In Switzerland, convictions are recorded in the year the prosecution was initiated and only recorded when all appeals are finalized, which can cause prior year prosecution and conviction statistics to increase slightly as cases are finalized. Courts faced a judicial backlog due to insufficient staffing. Experts observed courts took multiple years to finalize complex cases, which disproportionately affected trafficking cases; and traffickers often appealed severe judgments. As convictions and sentences are statistically recorded for the year a trial is started in, appealed verdicts are not covered in year-to-year data and the conclusions of this report. As in the previous reporting period, the government did not collect national statistics on the total number of prosecutions initiated in a given year under Article 182, necessitating an assessment of only successful prosecutions that resulted in conviction. Based on unfinalized data, in 2022, the most recent year for which data was available, cantonal authorities and courts reported successfully prosecuting and convicting at least six traffickers under Article 182. This was a decrease compared with thirteen convictions in 2021 and comparable with eight in 2020; however, compared with convictions from 2012 to 2016, statistics showed an overall long-term downward trend (4 in 2018; 6 in 2017; 11 in 2016, 21 in 2015, 15 in 2014, 13 in 2013, and 13 in 2012). The government did not disaggregate data between sex and labor trafficking under Article 182 in 2022. In 2023, the government changed an ordinance to allow for differentiating between sex and labor trafficking convictions and sentencing data, and sharing this data with federal and cantonal police. Historically, prosecutions and convictions for labor trafficking were low, while NGOs continued to assert many labor trafficking cases were pursued as administrative labor violations, resulting in lesser consequences and decreased deterrence. Of the six convictions in 2022, courts issued fully suspended prison sentences or assigned a sentence of less than one year imprisonment to four traffickers (66 percent). Courts sentenced two traffickers (33 percent) to significant prison terms of one year or longer. Lenient sentencing practices weakened deterrence, potentially, undercut efforts of police and prosecutors, and created security and safety concerns, particularly for victims who cooperated with investigations and prosecutions. Some NGOs recommended the government enact a minimum sentence for all convicted traffickers – not

just trafficking crimes involving children – to address issues with lenient sentencing. As a comparison, in 2022 of the 71 convicted rapists, 34 (61 percent) were sentenced to significant prison sentences of one year or longer in prison. As a comparison, in 2022 of the 71 convicted rapists, 34 (61 percent) were sentenced to significant prison sentences of one year or longer in prison. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes. In 2023, four domestic workers filed a case against Pakistani diplomats from the Pakistan Mission in Geneva, alleging withheld wages and corollary forced labor indicators; consequently, the government provided the domestic workers employed by the Pakistani Mission with protection services, including housing and an allowance, under the Victim Assistance Act, while the investigation remained ongoing. In another high-profile case, Swiss authorities investigated a prominent businessman for alleged forced labor in domestic servitude. Authorities continued to report the prevalence of "lover boy" traffickers, which was a method of trafficking that involved young male traffickers who coerce girls and women into sex trafficking, often through a sham romantic relationship. This method of trafficking affected both Swiss nationals and foreign nationals, and authorities reported the conviction of six traffickers under Article 182 in 2022. In 2022, courts convicted three traffickers in "lover boy" cases and sentenced two traffickers to more than 10 years in prison, and one trafficker to 10 years in prison; however, at least two of three convicted traffickers appealed their court orders. NGOs noted a demonstrated lack of willingness to investigate and convict traffickers' accomplices.

As a federal system, jurisdiction for investigations and criminal prosecutions in Switzerland rested with the 26 cantons except for cases involving organized criminal networks, which fell under federal police (FedPol) jurisdiction. Consequently, procedures, staffing, and funding varied from canton to canton; officials noted that some of the smaller cantons did not have sufficient resources to gather evidence to prove trafficking crimes. For example, observers noted police in some cantons lacked the capacity to investigate trafficking crimes involving online exploitation. Although FedPol provided training to the cantons on investigation techniques, observers continued to note the federal authorities did not sufficiently provide coordination, guidance, or information on trafficking trends to the cantons. Most cantonal police forces were involved in cross-cantonal treaties among police, to improve their coordination and allocate resources on cross-cantonal issues, including trafficking; however, these were frequently reorganized. At least six of 26 cantons had specialized anti-trafficking police units, but NGOs reported these units lacked sufficient funding and personnel. Some cantons had prosecutors who specialized in human trafficking; however, NGOs recommended increased trauma-informed training for prosecutors.

Civil society organizations continued to report deficiencies in the government's response to identify, investigate and prosecute labor trafficking cases, especially for domestic servitude. NGOs also reported that insufficient coordination between cantons hindered law enforcement efforts against organized human trafficking networks, with frequent duplication of efforts. In 2023, the government and government-funded NGOs conducted various anti-trafficking trainings for labor inspectors, police officers, prosecutors, and border and immigration officials. Civil society emphasized the need for institutionalized training on human trafficking for prosecutors and judges.

Law enforcement continued to cooperate with foreign counterparts to investigate transnational trafficking crimes. In June 2023, the canton of St. Gallen arrested three suspected traffickers in a case of exploitation of People's Republic of China (PRC)-nationals; and the canton of Geneva police arrested a dozen suspected traffickers. In collaboration with the OSCE and European counterparts, Swiss authorities acquired and installed new software for investigating sex trafficking crimes online. Switzerland fulfilled a request for mutual legal assistance in at least one trafficking case. Switzerland previously maintained at least 10 police attachés posted abroad, who provided support to government prosecution authorities in combating trans-border crime, and police cooperation agreements with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Macedonia, Nigeria, Serbia, and Slovenia.

PROTECTION

The government maintained victim protection efforts. In 2022, the most recent year for which data was available, cantonal authorities identified 38 victims under Article 182, a decrease compared with 62 in 2021, 53 in 2020, 83 in 2019, and 64 in 2018. The government reported identifying 11 labor trafficking victims and 27 sex trafficking victims. Of the 38 trafficking victims identified by the government in 2022, the government reported that one was a child and two were Swiss. The government reported identifying four trafficking victims within the asylum system. The federal government had a national victim identification mechanism, standardized questions, and a regional referral mechanism; but its implementation was inconsistent and varied by canton. The NAP instructed cantons to implement guidelines on victim identification; however, differences existed in how cantons applied these and in their capacities to identify victims generally. Observers reported there were no formalized standards for victim identification at the canton level, and some cantons developed their own cantonal referral mechanisms or remained without them. Some NGOs continued to assert officials continued to identify more sex trafficking victims than labor trafficking victims. Law enforcement authorities acknowledged this issue and noted additional resources and specialization across all cantons would allow law enforcement to better address labor trafficking within the country. The canton of Bern continued

joint checks with the police, migration authorities, and the labor inspectorate to identify labor trafficking victims. Standardized identification procedures for children were used inconsistently.

While authorities continued to note the growing number of potential trafficking victims among asylum-seekers, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) reported officially identifying four asylum seeking trafficking victims in 2022, compared with zero in 2021, four in 2020, and one in 2019. SEM continued to publish a list of indicators to identify and detect potential trafficking victims and trained staff on identification. In January 2024, the government passed a new agreement between SEM and the NGOs specialized in victim care which required SEM staff to inform potential victims of services available in their region. SEM reported providing potential trafficking victims with a pamphlet on their rights and free legal advice during their hearing to determine if they were victims. The government's border police screened newly arrived asylum-seekers, and specialists at SEM ensured identification and coordination practices remained consistent across the federal asylum reception centers. Previously, the asylum and human trafficking working group published its recommendations for improving the identification of trafficking victims in the asylum system. However, NGOs reported that these efforts lacked sufficient funding to be fully implemented. Although SEM is trained in victim identification and has provided a checklist for victim identification, civil society urged for law enforcement to take a more victim-centered and trauma informed approach to victim interviews. Civil society urged the government to involve them at the earliest stage possible in the asylum hearings to ensure victims of trafficking avoid deportation. Civil society reported that authorities may have inappropriately penalized unidentified victims, including children, with fines or deportation for immigration offenses they may have committed as a direct result of being trafficked due to victims not being identified as such.

The government reported referring 37 victims to services in 2022. In 2023, the federal government allocated 800,000 Swiss francs (\$954,650) to seven NGOs for victim assistance, prevention, and protection efforts, including public awareness activities, compared with 600,00 Swiss francs (\$715,990) in 2022 from the federal government. Cantonal and municipal governments allocated the majority of funds for victim assistance; however, the government did not report the total amount of cantonal or municipal funding in 2023. Civil society continued to assert funding was insufficient. In 2022, the most recent year for which data was available, government-funded NGOs provided assistance to at least 177 potential trafficking victims. This compared with 207 victims in 2021. NGOs reported victims from Pakistan, Africa, and Eastern Europe. NGOs did not report how many victims were referred to care by civil society, medical staff, or police, respectively. Specialized services were available with support from the cantons, FedPol, and SEM; with 37 victims receiving these services in 2022. The government reported providing trafficking-

specific counseling in 264 sessions for trafficking victims, relatives, and caretakers in 2022, the most recent year data was available; this was comparable with 271 in 2021.

Victim care varied across the cantons, and civil society continued to criticize the absence of a national victim protection program to ensure uniformity in victim assistance across the country, asserting this could lead to re-traumatization for victims and inconsistent quality of care. Victim assistance is mandatory by law for all cantons, providing a wide-ranging network of care facilities mainly tailored to the needs of women and children; however, trafficking specific services varied significantly from canton to canton, and was only available in 24 out of 26 cantons. Two small rural cantons without victim care outsourced victim care to larger cantons with the capacity to provide assistance, though they remained responsible for providing the funding to do so. Cantonal authorities oversaw day-to-day victim referrals, while roundtables coordinated referral mechanisms on a larger scale. Twenty of 26 cantons had roundtables, which coordinated victim identification and referral mechanisms; roundtables included police, prosecutors, and NGOs. The government held inter-cantonal roundtables at least once in 2023. NGOs continued to raise concerns about the discrepancies between cantonal efforts to identify, assist, and protect victims, noting smaller cantons did not have the resources or means to properly assist victims, which could result in re-traumatization. At least 13 cantons maintained formal referral and cooperation agreements with NGO-operated victim assistance facilities that specialized in trafficking. In 2023, the canton of Valais funded a specialized NGO to provide assistance to victims, while previously there were no specialized services available to trafficking victims in Valais.

The Swiss Victim Assistance Law entitled all adult trafficking victims access to government-funded shelters or assistance centers for victims of abuse and to special safeguards during criminal proceedings, but victims exploited abroad only received minimal support like housing, instead of the full victim assistance under Swiss Victim Assistance Law. The government did not report how many trafficking victims received shelter or special safeguards. Four government-funded NGOs operated shelters and provided specialized assistance for victims of trafficking, two of which provided services to children. However, GRETA and civil society reported the government did not have specialized shelters or assistance for child victims of trafficking, with child victims receiving services in shelters focused on abuse protection and treatment in general; options for accommodation for children varied by canton. The government housed potential trafficking victims undergoing an asylum determination process in asylum reception centers until SEM assigned them a canton. With the noted variances, most cantons generally provided victims with a minimum of four weeks of emergency lodging and living allowance, several hours of consultations with a lawyer, mental health counseling and medical treatment, transportation, and translation services. If recovery required

more time, the victim assistance law mandated the government assume the additional cost of longer-term care. Civil society stated services for labor trafficking victims were limited and services, including shelter options for male victims were inadequate. The government provided male victims temporary shelter in hotels or government-funded NGO-operated shelters in at least five cantons. Victims could move freely in and out of shelters. A variety of sources referred victims to NGO services, including other NGOs, government-operated counseling centers, government offices, foreign consulates, police and judicial authorities, health care sector employees, lawyers, and family.

While victim assistance was not dependent on cooperation with law enforcement, some NGOs expressed concern authorities sometimes withheld a residence permit or financial assistance, to pressure victims into cooperating with law enforcement. NGOs also noted authorities did not always follow trauma-informed practices when assisting male victims, for example, requiring victims to sit in the same room as traffickers during a police interview. While NGOs confirmed trafficking victims had access to victim-witness protection programs if the government referred them, they noted victims were sometimes unaware of their entitlement or it was unavailable to them if they were exploited in trafficking in another country. The government did not report offering witness protection in any cases in 2023. The law allowed victims to keep their identities confidential if they were in danger and to testify in a separate room from the defendant or by video. The government prohibited cross-examinations for child trafficking victims, testimonies were videotaped, and authorities conducted no more than two interviews to minimize re-traumatization.

The government facilitated assistance to foreign victims of trafficking, which could include financial support and residence permits; however, authorities granted few long-term residence permits and instead provided victims with repatriation assistance. NGOs also reported cantonal differences in how frequently authorities issued residence permits, which are necessary for foreign victims to work. Cantonal immigration authorities were required to grant victims a minimum 30-day reflection period to decide whether to participate in judicial proceedings against traffickers, but longer stays generally required cooperation with law enforcement. During the reflection period, victims were able to obtain victim protection and assistance services from NGOs. Foreign victims who were willing to cooperate with law enforcement could be granted, for the duration of the investigation and criminal proceedings, up to a one-year residence permit after which victims were required to depart the country. The government could also grant long-term residence permits, also known as hardship visas, which are mainly used for cases where there was a significant risk of re-trafficking, although the government did not report providing long-term residence permits. NGOs asserted the uncertainty around whether victims were permitted to stay in Switzerland following an investigation disincentivized victims from collaborating with

authorities. NGOs stated victims who gave unclear statements to law enforcement due to trauma suffered were often denied residence permits. While the government had a national guideline to ensure uniformity in the granting of residence permits across the country, in practice, the approval of the permits varied by canton. In 2023, the government provided nine trafficking victims repatriation assistance. One NGO reported several cases in 2023 where trafficking victims were not granted a hardship visa and may have faced risk of re-trafficking or violence in return to their country of origin.

Previously, civil society noted unaccompanied children disappeared from asylum centers, often attempting to seek work or traveling to relatives in surrounding countries, which put them at a risk of being trafficked. GRETA's 2019 report urged the government to address the lack of adequate accommodation and supervision for unaccompanied children and lack of a systematic approach. NGOs reported the government provided legal aid only to victims without the means to hire a lawyer and some of the cost was given as an advance that had to be repaid at a later point. NGOs and GRETA continued to report asylum accommodations and psychological counseling in asylum centers were inappropriate and insufficient for assisting trafficking victims due to the lack of specialized training for staff. Some NGOs reported some accommodations were not gender sensitive. A 2023 report found inadequate conditions in asylum centers may have put unaccompanied minors at risk of trafficking. The guide on accommodation requirements for asylum-seekers at federal asylum centers remained pending for the second consecutive reporting period. GRETA noted cantons often did not transfer victims detected in the asylum system to specialized trafficking victim support centers because of financial constraints and instead continued to host them in asylum centers.

Foreign victims of trafficking who traffickers exploited outside of Switzerland were not entitled to the same range of assistance services under Swiss law as victims exploited in the country. NGOs argued exceptions to this policy under Article 17 of the Swiss Victim Assistance Act were not uniformly applied. NGOs urged the government to enact additional protections and assistance for victims who experienced trafficking abroad. Although the Swiss Parliament considered a proposal to enable victims of certain offenses abroad to receive assistance in 2022, the Swiss Parliament rejected this initiative. As the Swiss Victim Assistance Act is not available to victims exploited outside of Switzerland, they did not receive specialized care but only minimal assistance to prevent social hardship.

The government continued to lack comprehensive statistics on restitution and damages awarded to victims and did not require prosecutors to systematically request restitution during criminal trials. Victims could obtain restitution through criminal proceedings. In 2023, courts did not

report awarding any restitution to victims. GRETA and civil society previously noted restitution amounts were insufficient. NGOs and GRETA reported it was often a difficult and lengthy process for victims to obtain restitution from traffickers and few victims received the full amount, including because of the difficulty of locating perpetrators' assets abroad. Additionally, the government did not report whether any victims brought suits and were consequently awarded damages in 2023 nor did the government report awarding compensation to any victims in 2023. NGOs reported cases where a victim, who courts previously awarded restitution but had not been paid, sought compensation from a cantonal authority, but the canton did not award any compensation. Although the government continued to screen for trafficking victims, NGOs asserted authorities routinely inappropriately penalized unidentified victims for unlawful acts committed as direct result of being trafficked, with victims frequently fined or charged with petty crimes, violation of local commercial sex regulations, or immigration and labor laws. Civil society asserted certain minorities are more likely to face punitive action, including male victims, who are rarely recognized as victims. Civil society urged the government to involve them at the earliest stages possible, as screenings by law enforcement, immigration, and social services remained inadequate, particularly in cases of labor exploitation, to ensure authorities did not inappropriately penalize victims. NGOs and GRETA urged the government to adopt a provision on the non-punishment of trafficking victims, in addition to the general clause on non-punishment contained in the Swiss Criminal Code, and GRETA encouraged additional training of public prosecutors in this regard; however, the government has not yet adopted this provision. In 2023, the government released a guide for prosecutors on how to apply the criminal code's general non-punishment clause in trafficking cases.

PREVENTION

The government maintained prevention efforts. Under FedPol, FSMM coordinated national efforts, including anti-trafficking policies, information exchange, cooperation, and training. NGOs and experts continued to assert insufficient personnel and funding hindered FSMM's ability to coordinate national anti-trafficking efforts across all 26 cantons. The federal coordinating body led by FSMM, the National Expert Group to Combat Trafficking in Persons, convened once in 2023. In February 2024, FSMM convened its national meeting of the heads of the cantonal anti-trafficking roundtables. Following several restructurings in previous years, civil society and GRETA reported a decrease in a victim-centered, multidisciplinary, and collaborative approach to trafficking in the FSMM. The government remained without an official independent national anti-trafficking rapporteur. The government continued to implement its 2023-2027 anti-trafficking NAP, which required cantons to set up roundtables to remove differences in protection for victims across cantons. However, the NAP did not include a specific budget for implementation. Civil society noted the lack of a dedicated budget to the NAP impeded its

implementation, and the government did not report what amount was spent from federal, cantonal, or municipal authorities to implement the NAP in 2023. In 2023, the government continued to partially fund an NGO-operated national anti-trafficking hotline, and allocated 53,000 Swiss francs (\$63,250) to the hotline in 2023, compared with 53,125 Swiss francs (\$63,400) in 2022. The hotline reported identifying 113 potential victims and referring 44 victims to police. Another government-funded NGO operated a 24-hour hotline police could use to refer trafficking victims to shelter and other victim protection services. The government, both independently and in partnership with civil society, conducted various awareness raising campaigns targeting vulnerable populations, including migrant workers and asylum-seekers, healthcare professionals, and labor inspectors, on trafficking risks, forced labor in supply chains, and victim identification. In 2023, the government established the National Human Rights Institution to research and advise on human rights issues in Switzerland, including human trafficking. The government funded and provided input to a report on trafficking trends in Switzerland published in 2024. The government extended temporary protective status through March 2025 for Ukrainian refugees fleeing Russia's full scale-invasion of Ukraine, a population highly vulnerable to trafficking, which observers noted also included financial support from the government, which may have reduced their risk of trafficking.

Insufficient personnel and resources hampered in depth labor inspections; additionally, civil society reported labor inspectors may have regarded foreign victims as criminals working illegally. The government did not report how many labor inspections it conducted in 2023. Labor inspectors lacked the legal authority to formally identify victims; however, if inspectors did identify any potential victims, they were required to refer potential trafficking cases to police. The government reported regular training courses for labor inspectors. Swiss labor law did not prohibit worker-paid recruitment fees; Swiss labor recruitment agencies required a license and were liable if foreign recruitment agencies did not uphold Swiss recruitment regulations. Although no cases of abuse of this system were reported, the labor law did not prohibit all worker-paid recruitment fees and Swiss employment agencies in possession of a special license could legally charge a registration or placement fee to employees, which could put them at risk of debt bondage. Third country nationals from non-EU countries, with short-term residence permits or work permits from another country, required approval from the government before changing employers, which may have increased their vulnerability to trafficking. The government continued the Swiss Forum on Business and Human Rights where the government agreed to provide support to small-to-medium enterprises regarding human rights due diligence; the government hosted and funded a multistakeholder event in 2023 on human rights in corporate government, including human trafficking, and training courses on business and human rights throughout the year with a focus on forced labor in supply chains. A 2021 law allowed the government contracting

authority to require suppliers to comply with provisions related to the protection of employees, labor conditions, equal pay, and environmental regulations prior to awarding public procurement contracts; if suppliers failed to comply, they could be excluded from obtaining future contracts for five years. Swiss law required companies in Switzerland, and their subsidiaries abroad, with more than 500 employees to publish yearly reports on the risk of forced labor or child labor in their supply chains starting in 2023.

The government continued to provide funding to NGOs and foreign countries for anti-trafficking efforts and to OSCE prevention efforts among Ukrainian refugees, including a rapid assessment of human trafficking trends in the context of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The government continued to fund the Better Work and the Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises programs, which aimed to improve working conditions, including forced labor, around the world. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for participation in extraterritorial commercial child sexual exploitation by Swiss nationals or permanent residents, despite allegations of such actions by its citizens.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Switzerland. Traffickers increasingly use online platforms to recruit and exploit victims in sex and labor trafficking, and book apartment rentals to make their illicit operations difficult to track. Traffickers increasingly target and exploit victims online and online sexual exploitation of children, including sex trafficking, is increasing. Following the pandemic, authorities noted an increase in escorts, which made monitoring for sex trafficking more difficult as victims move locations rather than stay in one establishment. Refugees, predominantly women and children, fleeing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, remain at risk of trafficking. Swiss authorities and NGOs did not report identifying Ukrainian refugee victims of trafficking in Switzerland. Traffickers are frequently family members, friends, or romantic partners, as well as agencies offering fraudulent employment, travel, and marriage. Traffickers are both Swiss and foreign nationals; foreign traffickers are often victims of the same nationality as victims. Although the vast majority of traffickers are male, female traffickers are not uncommon, especially women from Nigeria and Thailand. Sex traffickers exploit both foreign and Swiss women, transgender persons, and children. Traffickers in Switzerland may receive support from well-organized criminal structures abroad who combine human trafficking and other forms of crime, such as drug trafficking. Traffickers, often involved with criminal networks, increasingly exploit female and transgender victims from Thailand. NGOs observe traffickers exploiting Thai and Vietnamese victims in the nail industry. Swiss nationals continue to engage in extraterritorial commercial

child sexual exploitation, including in Cambodia and Madagascar. Young male traffickers, known as “lover boys,” increasingly coerce vulnerable Swiss girls and women into sex trafficking, often through a sham romantic relationship. The majority of foreign trafficking victims identified by the government are from Central and Eastern Europe, including Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania, with increasing numbers from the PRC, Nigeria, and Thailand, but also Latin America. Traffickers continue to fraudulently recruit and later coerce Nigerian women and girls to stay in exploitative situations by forcing them to swear a “voodoo oath.” Traffickers often force female victims among asylum-seekers from Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Nigeria into sex trafficking and domestic servitude. Many trafficking victims are asylum-seekers who sought protection in Switzerland and who are at risk for re-trafficking. Labor traffickers exploit men, women, and children in domestic service, health care, agriculture, hospitality, nail salons, catering, postal courier services, construction, agriculture, cleaning, tourism, and in forced criminal activity, including petty crimes and drug trafficking. Traffickers exploit male asylum-seekers, primarily from Afghanistan and Eritrea, in forced labor. Forced begging, especially among the Romani communities, continues to increase.

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