

# 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Czech Republic

## CZECH REPUBLIC (Tier 1)

The Government of the Czech Republic (Czechia) fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period; therefore, Czechia remained on Tier 1. These efforts included investigating significantly more trafficking cases and supporting victims who chose to cooperate in criminal justice proceedings through the Ministry of Interior's (MOI) Program of Support and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (the Program), including providing long-term care to victims referred in previous years. The government collaborated with NGOs to provide services to more victims and potential victims who did not participate in the Program. Police conducted joint operations with labor inspectors focused on detecting labor exploitation, which resulted in the identification of potential labor trafficking cases, and authorities investigated and penalized fraudulent recruitment agencies. The government provided robust anti-trafficking training to law enforcement officials and protection actors. Although the government meets the minimum standards, it prosecuted fewer trafficking crimes than in 2023, and efforts to proactively screen vulnerable populations for trafficking indicators remained inadequate. The government also referred fewer trafficking victims to the Program, and officials inappropriately penalized some trafficking victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. Overall efforts to investigate and prosecute child trafficking crimes and identify child trafficking victims remained inadequate. The government did not maintain comprehensive assistance statistics and, therefore, could not identify and respond to gaps in services.

## PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Significantly improve efforts to combat child trafficking, including by increasing law enforcement efforts, increasing identification efforts, and providing specialized shelter services and long-term case management for all child victims.
- Improve victim identification and referral procedures by outlining roles and responsibilities of front-line officials in screening vulnerable populations and referring victims to care.
- Increase efforts to proactively identify victims, including by training front-line officials to screen for trafficking indicators among vulnerable populations, including unaccompanied children, children in institutional care, asylum-seekers, and migrant workers, and refer all victims to appropriate care.
- Vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking crimes and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, such as immigration or labor violations.
- Standardize anti-trafficking training for all prosecutors and judges, including civil and administrative judges, on the severity of the crime, recognizing subtle forms of coercion, the irrelevance of a victim's initial consent when proving a trafficking crime, and victim-centered, trauma-informed procedures.
- Improve and reform data collection efforts, including by disaggregating sex and labor trafficking case data and comprehensively reporting victim data, particularly on children and those who do not participate in the Program.
- Increase training for labor inspectors to identify labor trafficking, including subtle forms of coercion, and refer cases of potential labor trafficking to law enforcement.

- Improve victims' access to court-ordered restitution in criminal cases and compensation through civil proceedings.
- Increase survivor engagement, including by establishing accessible mechanisms for receiving and providing compensation for survivor input when forming policies, programs, and trainings.

## PROSECUTION

The government slightly increased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts.

Section 168 of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed punishments of two to 10 years' imprisonment. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape. Additionally, Article 189 of the criminal code criminalized "solicitation," which could be used to prosecute some sex trafficking offenses; it prescribed penalties of six months to 12 years' imprisonment.

In 2024, police investigated 39 trafficking cases, an increase compared with 13 investigations in 2023; however, the government did not disaggregate the data to distinguish between new investigations and those initiated in previous years that remained ongoing. The government initiated prosecutions of three alleged sex traffickers and continued prosecutions of 13 alleged traffickers (11 for sex trafficking and two unspecified forms of trafficking) under Section 168. This was a decrease compared with prosecutions of 24 alleged traffickers in 2023; however, in 2023, the government did not disaggregate the data to distinguish between new prosecutions and those initiated in previous years that remained ongoing. Courts convicted 11 traffickers (10 sex traffickers and one labor trafficker), compared with 13 convictions in 2023. Courts issued sentences ranging from one year to eight-and-a-half years' imprisonment. Judges suspended the prison sentences of four convicted traffickers, including two teenage children; judges issued five suspended sentences in 2023. Authorities also investigated 46 "solicitation" cases, which often included indicators of sex trafficking. The government reported initiating prosecutions of four defendants, continuing prosecutions of nine defendants, and convicting 24 defendants for "solicitation" under Article 189 of the criminal code. Of the 24 defendants convicted, courts issued probation to 21, and 11 received fines ranging from 32,000 koruna to three million koruna (\$1,360 to \$127,455); courts sentenced two defendants to one-and-a-half and three years' imprisonment. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in trafficking crimes.

The National Center for Combating Organized Crime (NCOZ)'s Trafficking in Human Beings Division (THBD) was the lead investigative agency for trafficking within the national police and oversaw trafficking cases involving organized crime. Regional police were responsible for other trafficking cases, and each regional office had two dedicated officers. A designated prosecutor in the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO) served as the national focal point for trafficking and domestic violence cases and coordinated with specialized prosecutors in every region. Under a 2024 amendment to the decree on judicial procedure, judges in district and regional courts could specialize in cases on human trafficking, sex crimes, or other forms of abuse; during the reporting period, at least one court implemented the provision and designated two judges responsible for presiding over cases involving sex crimes, including trafficking. However, the amendment did not mandate specific training for specialized judges, and gaps in court capacity and resources hindered specialization efforts. While the criminal justice system effectively identified and processed sex trafficking cases, observers reported efforts to identify and prosecute labor trafficking cases were inadequate. The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) noted Section 168 did not explicitly state the irrelevance of the victim's initial consent to subsequent exploitation, which potentially led to uneven implementation of the law. Courts sometimes reclassified trafficking cases as other crimes, such as "solicitation" or labor violations, which carried lesser penalties. Observers also reported law enforcement made limited efforts to address child sex trafficking.

The government provided anti-trafficking training for law enforcement, asylum officers, prosecutors, judges, and other front-line officials on topics including investigation techniques, victim identification, and trafficking trends. The MOI also convened five regional roundtables for front-line officials focused on improving victim identification and cooperation among anti-trafficking stakeholders. The government provided anti-trafficking training to all entry-level police officers and advanced specialized training to all NCOZ and border police officers. However, frequent turnover among specialized law enforcement officers impacted the trainings' effectiveness. The government did not mandate anti-trafficking training for judges, and observers reported inconsistent knowledge of human trafficking among judges impeded prosecution efforts. The Judicial Academy offered anti-trafficking courses; however, the trainings often targeted criminal judges rather than civil and administrative judges responsible for cases affecting victims' rights, such as foreign victims' legal status and the right to remain in the country. Authorities regularly collaborated with foreign governments and EUROPOL on transnational investigations. Designated liaison police officers assigned to Czechia's embassies in the United Kingdom and Romania cooperated with foreign counterparts on transnational trafficking cases. The government also participated in an EU task force of specialized prosecutors focused on strengthening judicial cooperation in transnational trafficking cases. The MOI and Ministry of Justice (MOJ) continued a project to standardize law enforcement data on crime, including trafficking, and harmonize data collection methodologies and definitions.

## PROTECTION

The government maintained victim protection efforts.

The Program assisted adult victims participating in the criminal justice process and remained the only official source of data on victim identification and protection. In 2024, police referred 10 adult victims to the Program, compared with 18 victims in 2023 and 33 in 2022; this was the lowest number of victims that entered the program since 2017. Of the 10 victims identified in 2024, traffickers exploited two in sex trafficking, six in labor trafficking, and two in both sex and labor trafficking. Most victims were Czech, while foreign national victims were from Central and Eastern Europe. The Program continued assisting 53 victims referred in previous years. The government did not officially recognize victims who did not participate in the Program, although it provided support to NGOs that assisted potential victims or victims who chose to not participate in criminal justice proceedings. In 2024, an NGO, with government support, assisted 33 potential victims not in the Program (including 24 new victims), compared with assisting 14 victims the previous year. The government did not collect victim protection data on child trafficking cases, and — despite reports that child sex trafficking cases continued to increase — the government did not report identifying any child victims. In its 2024 report, GRETA noted available statistics did not reflect the full scale of human trafficking due to gaps in data collection, lack of proactive victim identification, restrictive criteria for formal victim identification, and reclassification of trafficking cases as other crimes.

Law enforcement agencies and NGOs followed written guidelines on victim identification and referral. However, as underscored by GRETA in its 2024 report, the guidelines focused primarily on referring trafficking victims to the Program rather than outlining roles and responsibilities of front-line officials to proactively screen for trafficking indicators. The MOI continued distributing cards describing vulnerable populations' trafficking indicators to front-line officials and migrant workers. The MOI maintained a manual outlining best practices in handling child trafficking cases. The government, in collaboration with civil society, provided anti-trafficking training to 380 child protection staff and social workers. It also collaborated with an NGO to train asylum officials and social workers working in foreign national detention facilities on victim identification, and every detention or asylum facility had at least one specially-trained social worker.

The MOI funded an NGO to implement the Program to provide medical care, psychological and crisis counseling, housing, legal representation, vocational training, and other specialized services to officially-recognized adult trafficking victims. The government generally placed victims in

NGO-run shelters. The Program granted participants a 60- to 90-day reflection period, after which they were required to assist law enforcement if they wanted to remain in the Program. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MLSA) funded NGOs to provide comparable services to victims who chose not to participate in or withdrew from the Program and to victims whose cases authorities did not pursue. The Program offered victim-witness support, including a legal advocate, security protection, the ability to choose a male or female interviewer and interpreter, and, in some cases, the option to testify via videoconference. Program participants could continue receiving free legal representation in civil proceedings after criminal proceedings ended. The Program also provided legal aid to foreign victims who voluntarily returned home while criminal and civil proceedings were ongoing. Foreign national victims participating in the Program could receive residence permits and work visas for the duration of legal proceedings, and — upon completion of the program — foreign victims could receive repatriation assistance or apply for permanent residency. The government did not report granting residency permits to any victims during the reporting period. Foreign national victims exploited outside of Czechia were not eligible to join the Program but could receive other services. The MOI allocated approximately two million koruna (\$85,000) for the Program, an increase compared with 1.65 million koruna (\$70,100) in 2023. The MLSA and MOJ provided an additional 10.9 million koruna (\$463,100) to the Program implementer providing social services to both Program and non-Program participants, compared with 13.5 million koruna (\$573,500) in 2023.

The government did not offer specialized shelter or services to child trafficking victims; authorities placed child victims in foster care or child protection facilities. Social workers developed individualized support plans for potential child trafficking victims, including provision of health and psychological support. According to the 2024 GRETA report, observers reported the child protection system did not have the capacity to effectively support all unaccompanied foreign children, increasing vulnerability to trafficking. The government generally placed unaccompanied child trafficking victims in a Ministry of Education-run facility for foreign children; however, in the past, some potential child trafficking victims reportedly escaped or disappeared from the facility. Authorities made minimal efforts to screen unaccompanied foreign children transiting through Czechia for trafficking indicators.

The government reportedly arrested and prosecuted potential trafficking victims for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, including cannabis farming, and fined potential victims for performing “irregular work.” While courts ruled authorities were obligated to consider the vulnerability of foreigners prior to deportation, GRETA’s 2024 report noted authorities’ efforts to screen this population for trafficking indicators prior to deportation remained insufficient. The government reportedly deported potential trafficking victims seeking asylum to the first country in which they applied for asylum under the “Dublin” regulation – a rule governing which “Dublin” country (EU countries, Iceland, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Norway) should assess an asylum-seeker’s application – without screening for trafficking indicators.

The law allowed victims to obtain restitution in criminal proceedings; however, courts did not consistently issue restitution and often referred victims to civil courts to file for compensation. The government did not report ordering restitution in any cases in 2024. The law allowed victims to seek compensation from traffickers through civil suits; however, to seek civil damages, the law required a finding of criminal misconduct against the defendant. Civil proceedings often took years and placed the burden of proof on the victims. GRETA reported no trafficking victims filed claims for compensation in civil court from 2022 to 2024.

## **PREVENTION**

The government slightly increased prevention efforts.

The MOI chaired the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Group (IMCG), which included representatives from various government ministries, three NGOs, and an international organization; the IMCG met twice. The government extended its 2020-2023 national strategy through 2025. The MOI’s Crime

Prevention Department (CPD) served as the national rapporteur and prepared a comprehensive annual report on trafficking patterns and programs. GRETA urged the government to designate an independent national rapporteur. The government, both independently and in collaboration with government-funded NGOs, conducted awareness campaigns targeting the general public, government officials, civil society, and vulnerable groups, including migrant workers and Ukrainian refugees. The government, as part of a research institute project on child trafficking prevention, published an analytic study of child trafficking in Czechia and created an online platform providing resources and information on trafficking indicators. The MLSA and the State Labor Inspection Office (SUIP) websites published information in multiple languages about foreign workers' rights, Czech labor laws, and requirements for work permits. The MLSA, in collaboration with the EU, continued implementing a project to provide support to, and offer employment services for, foreign workers, particularly persons with temporary protection. The Program's government-funded implementer operated an anti-trafficking hotline on weekdays in eight languages, and the government operated and funded additional hotlines for vulnerable populations, including crime victims and Ukrainian refugees. The government and NGOs trained hotline operators on identifying and assisting trafficking victims. The hotlines did not report identifying any potential victims in 2024, compared with identifying eight potential victims in 2023. The government continued to partially fund an NGO-run online platform providing information and resources to Ukrainian refugees. The government changed humanitarian benefits available to Ukrainian refugees, including reducing the provision of emergency accommodation from 150 days after arrival to 90 days, and the government provided a financial incentive for refugees to voluntarily return to Ukraine; these changes increased vulnerability to trafficking.

The government reported providing anti-trafficking training to labor inspectors during the reporting period. Labor inspectors referred potential cases to law enforcement for investigation; however, the labor inspectorate lacked sufficient resources to fully execute its mandate, and inspectors rarely identified labor trafficking victims. Police, in collaboration with labor inspectors, conducted an annual joint operation focused on labor exploitation; authorities conducted 35 inspections and identified 83 violations, including potential labor trafficking crimes. The MLSA oversaw and issued permits to employment agencies, and SUIP inspected agencies and worksites for illegal work practices. However, unregistered labor recruitment agencies ("pseudo-agencies") continued offering recruitment services, often charging illegal deductions or not fulfilling employee contracts; the agencies typically procured workers for large construction or international food companies. Most suspected cases of labor trafficking were arranged via these types of agencies. In January 2024, the government increased penalties for agencies facilitating illegal or disguised employment recruitment services; agencies engaged in these practices faced a ban of up to two years and fines up to 10 million koruna (\$425,000). SUIP inspectors identified 263 illegal "pseudo-agencies" in 2024, compared with 309 in 2023; the government also issued 253 fines totaling more than 151.4 million koruna (\$6.4 million) for disguised employment recruitment services. The labor code prohibited worker-paid recruitment fees. However, the law did not specifically criminalize confiscation of workers' passports. Foreign workers could change employers after six months or with special permission from the MOI. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts.

To safeguard against exploitation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and SUIP interviewed domestic employees of accredited diplomatic personnel in Czechia upon registration and reviewed documents for compliance with Czech labor laws. Labor inspectors had the authority to conduct random checks of the employee's workplaces, with the exception of diplomats' households. The MFA also provided diplomats with a detailed manual summarizing domestic workers' rights, employers' responsibilities, and contractual requirements.

## **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 Czechia, and traffickers exploit Czech victims abroad. Traffickers

exploit Czech women and children and foreign victims from central and eastern European and east Asian countries in sex trafficking in Czechia, and traffickers transport sex trafficking victims through Czechia to other European countries. Traffickers exploit Czech victims in forced labor and sex trafficking abroad, especially the UK. Traffickers exploit Czech children from impoverished families in sex trafficking in the northern part of the country. Sex traffickers, including tourists, exploit children — increasingly boys — in cities. Traffickers increasingly exploit sex trafficking victims in private residences versus public spaces, making cases more difficult to identify. Traffickers, including relatives, exploit Romani victims from Czechia in forced labor and sex trafficking internally and abroad, including the UK. Traffickers target individuals with drug dependencies, debts, and criminal records, as well as persons who were homeless, children in foster care, and senior citizens. Traffickers increasingly use online platforms to recruit sex and labor trafficking victims.

Labor trafficking is the most prevalent form of trafficking and continues to increase. Traffickers exploit Czech men and women and foreign victims from other European countries including Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine, as well as Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines, in forced labor in Czechia, typically through debt-based coercion or exploitation of other vulnerabilities, in the construction, agricultural, forestry, manufacturing, food processing, and service sectors, including in domestic work. Vietnamese criminal networks active in Czechia exploit Vietnamese victims in sex and labor trafficking, including in forced criminality in cannabis production. “Pseudo-agencies” use deceptive practices to recruit workers from abroad as well as from inside the country; these recruiters charge illegal fees and use debt bondage to coerce victims into forced labor. Roma and persons with disabilities in Czechia are vulnerable to trafficking. Traffickers exploit Ukrainian migrants in sex trafficking and forced labor. As of March 2025, nearly 400,000 Ukrainian refugees who registered for temporary protection remained in Czechia; this population remains vulnerable to trafficking. Unaccompanied teenage children, including from Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine – especially children working in violation of labor laws and not enrolled in school – are vulnerable to trafficking.