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2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Switzerland

OFFICE TO MONITOR AND COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

IN THIS SECTION / SWITZERLAND (TIER 2)

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, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Switzerland remained on Tier 2. These efforts included adopting its third anti-trafficking NAP and allocating increased funding to protection and prevention efforts, including for Ukrainian refugees. There was a slight increase in the number of traffickers convicted in the reporting period. 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 the reporting period. The government did not report how many victims it assisted or referred to care, and services for children, male victims, and labor trafficking victims remained inadequate. Lenient sentencing, resulting 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 such as prosecutions of labor traffickers remained low, although the governme

provided disaggregated data on trafficking. Based on the data made available, the government awarded restitution to one victim during the reporting period.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers, 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.
- Increase victim identification and training for all front-line officials, with increased focus on identifying labor trafficking.
- Increase access to specialized services, especially for labor trafficking victims, asylum-seekers, male, child, and transgender victims.
- Increase law enforcement efforts on labor trafficking and provide sufficient resources, personnel, and training.
- Coordinate and centralize the 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.
- Amend the anti-trafficking provision of the criminal code to include force, fraud, or coercion as an essential element of the crime in accordance with international law 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 coordination of anti-trafficking efforts across all cantons.
- Increase awareness of and trafficking survivor access to compensation and increase prosecutors' efforts to systematically request restitution for survivors during criminal trials.
- Expand authorities for labor inspectors to identify trafficking victims.
- Increase efforts to pursue financial crime investigations in tandem with human trafficking cases.

- Investigate and prosecute labor trafficking as a trafficking crime and not as an administrative labor code violation.
 - Ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.
 - Strengthen international law enforcement cooperation to prevent and investigate child sex tourism.
 - Appoint a national rapporteur to provide independent review of government anti-trafficking efforts.
 - Increase worker protections by codifying in law the elimination of recruitment or placement fees that could potentially be charged to workers by Swiss labor recruiters and ensure employers pay any recruitment fees.
 - Increase survivor engagement, including by establishing accessible mechanisms for receiving and providing compensation for survivor input when forming policies, programs, and trainings.
 - Increase cooperation with civil society regarding victim identification assistance, especially for asylum hearings for potential victims.
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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 serious 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 limited data collection necessary for prevention efforts. In March 2022, the lower chamber of parliament approved a motion to draft a law making labor trafficking a federal offense, but the government did not report its progress on the law by the close of the reporting period.

In 2022, 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 and could be duplicative. 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. 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 2021, the most recent year available, cantonal authorities and courts reported successfully prosecuting and convicting at least 13 traffickers under Article 182, of which 4 were for sex trafficking and 9 for labor trafficking. This was an increase compared with eight convictions in 2020 and nine in 2019; 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). Whereas previously, the government did not report whether any prosecutions or convictions involved labor trafficking, as it did not disaggregate data between sex and labor trafficking under Article 182, the government disaggregated this data in 2021. 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 13 convictions in 2021, courts issued fully suspended prison sentences or assigned a sentence of less than one year imprisonment to seven traffickers (54 percent). Courts sentenced six traffickers (46 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 to enact a minimum sentence for all convicted traffickers – not just trafficking crimes involving children – to address issues with lenient sentencing. As a comparison, in 2021 of the 77 convicted rapists, 46 (60 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. 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 affects both Swiss nationals and foreign nationals, and authorities reported the conviction of seven traffickers in these crimes in May 2022; NGOs noted that

many “lover boy” traffickers continued to flout trafficking laws. In 2022, courts convicted three traffickers in “lover boy” cases and sentenced two traffickers to more than 10 years in prison, and sentenced one trafficker to 10 years in prison.

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. Observers noted the federal authorities did not consistently provide coordination, guidance, or information on trafficking trends to the cantons, although they provided this upon the request of cantonal police. At least six of 26 cantons had their own specialized anti-trafficking police units, while other cantons had specialized police officers, but NGOs reported these units lacked sufficient funding and personnel, given the government’s competing priorities with other crimes. Each canton had at least one prosecutor who specialized in human trafficking and the government had specialized prosecutors, with trauma-informed training, who usually handled human trafficking cases; however, NGOs recommended increased trauma-informed training for prosecutors. Civil society continued to report the government’s predominant focus on sex trafficking hindered the identification of labor trafficking cases and their prosecution. NGOs also reported that insufficient coordination between cantons hindered law enforcement efforts against organized human trafficking networks, with frequent duplication of efforts. The government and government-funded NGOs provided trafficking-related training to law enforcement, immigration officials working with asylum-seekers, judicial officials, prosecutors, and NGO staff in 2022. However, civil society raised concerns regarding the continued lack of institutionalized training for prosecutors and, especially, judges at the national level. In 2022, the government conducted various anti-trafficking trainings for police officers, consular officers, and staff in the asylum sector.

Law enforcement reported assisting in 17 new and ongoing international trafficking cases in 2022, compared with 29 in 2021 and 24 in 2020. In June 2022, FedPol participated in EMPACT Joint Action Days (JADs) focused on labor trafficking. In October 2022, a total of 34 European countries, including Switzerland, took part in several large-scale coordinated actions focused on sex trafficking, forced begging, and forced criminality, which resulted in the identification of 115 suspected traffickers and 910 potential trafficking victims overall. International cooperation between Swiss and Hungarian law enforcement in November 2022 resulted in

the identification of three trafficking victims and arrest of four suspects. In May 2022, authorities in the cantons worked with Belgium to arrest five alleged traffickers. Switzerland continued to share international law enforcement information, including on human trafficking, with European authorities and worked with INTERPOL on shared analysis. Switzerland fulfilled requests for extraditions and mutual legal assistance, including on financial investigations in a trafficking case. In September and December 2022, FedPol and Zurich police participated in a LIBERI project meeting and workshop. Switzerland 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. Authorities signed two migration partnerships with Georgia and North Macedonia, including on trafficking.

PROTECTION

The government decreased victim protection efforts. In 2022, 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. Authorities attributed the lower number of victims identified to the difficulty of detecting sex trafficking during the pandemic and traffickers' increasing mobility. The federal government had a national victim identification mechanism, standardized questions, and a regional referral mechanism; but implementation was inconsistent and varied by canton. The NAP instructed cantons to implement guidelines on victim identification; cantons applied these differently, having some liberty to adjust for regional differences. The government used various means to identify victims abroad. Media reported a 50 percent increase in the number of sex trafficking victims identified between 2019 to 2021. NGOs continued to assert officials prioritized the identification of sex trafficking victims over labor trafficking. 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 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 during the reporting period, they officially identified relatively few victims. The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) did not report officially identifying any 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. 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 alone to eliminate the potential influence of traffickers operating within migrant camps, and specialists at SEM ensured identification and coordination practices remained consistent across the federal asylum reception centers. In the previous reporting period, the Asylum and Human Trafficking working group published its recommendations for improving the identification of trafficking victims in the asylum system – many of which the government undertook. The government considered further reforms to improve early detection but did not enact them by the end of the reporting period. Civil society expressed concern that the government remained without a national victim identification mechanism for trafficking victims in the asylum system and urged increased national coordination and for law enforcement to take a more victim-centered and trauma informed approach to victim interviews. Trafficking victims often remained unidentified by the government within the asylum system and civil society urged the government to involve them at the earliest stage possible and at asylum hearings to ensure victims of trafficking avoided deportation. Civil society also criticized the government for its screening procedures which may have resulted in misidentifying unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as adults, which allowed authorities to transfer them back to their country of first entrance or into accommodation facilities for adults.

The government reported referring 37 victims to services in 2022. In 2022, the federal government granted 434,809 Swiss francs (\$471,080) to 7 NGOs for victim assistance, and public awareness activities, compared with 518,599 Swiss francs (\$561,860) in 2021 from the federal, cantonal, and municipal governments. Civil society continued to assert funding was insufficient. One government-funded NGO provided assistance to at least 96 potential trafficking victims in 2022. This was a decrease compared with 207 victims in 2021, 174 in 2020 and 142 in 2019. NGOs did not report the nationality of victims assisted nor whether victims were referred to care by civil society, medial staff, or police, respectively. Specialized services were available with support from the cantons, FedPol, SEM, and the DFAE; with 37 victims receiving these services in 2022. Additionally, the government reported providing trafficking-specific counseling in 271 sessions for trafficking victims, relatives, and caretakers

in 2021, the most recent year data was available; this was an increase compared with 254 in 2020, 193 in 2019, and 186 in 2018.

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. Victim assistance is mandatory by law for all cantons and was available in at least 24 out of the 26 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. The two rural cantons without victim assistance would reportedly transfer identified victims to larger cantons with the capacity to provide assistance, though they remained responsible for providing the funding to do so. Authorities noted cantonal conferences sought to harmonize the provision of services across cantons. Cantonal authorities maintained jurisdiction on providing protection for victims, and trafficking victims were entitled to utilizing free and immediate assistance centers that varied by canton. Cantonal authorities oversaw day-to-day victim referrals, while roundtables coordinated referral mechanisms on a larger scale. Eighteen of 26 cantons had roundtables, which coordinated victim referral mechanisms; roundtables included police, prosecutors, and NGOs. NGOs reported FedPol did not hold inter-cantonal roundtables in 2022 and eight cantons remained without roundtables for organizing victim identification and referral. 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.

The Swiss Victim Assistance Law entitled all adult trafficking victims access to government-funded women's shelters or assistance centers for victims of abuse and to special safeguards during criminal proceedings; however, the government did not report how many trafficking victims received shelter or special safeguards during the reporting period. At least four government-funded and NGO-operated shelters continued to provide 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 such children instead being received in shelters focused on abuse protection and treatment in general; options for accommodation for children varied by canton. Potential trafficking victims undergoing an asylum determination process are housed in asylum reception centers until SEM assigns 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 obligated the government to assume the additional cost of longer-term care. Civil society stated services for labor trafficking victims were limited and services for child and 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 do not always follow trauma-informed practices for male victims, for example, requiring victims to sit in the same room as their trafficker during a police interview. While NGOs confirmed trafficking victims had access to victim-witness assistance 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 reported witness protection was offered in one case in 2022. To encourage victims' cooperation with law enforcement, 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 also facilitated additional assistance to foreign victims of trafficking, which included financial support and residence permits; however, authorities granted few long-term residence permits and instead provided victims with repatriation assistance. Cantonal immigration authorities were required to grant victims a minimum 30-day reflection period to decide whether to participate in judicial proceedings against their 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. NGOs asserted the uncertainty around whether or not 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. 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 during the reporting period. 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 2022, the government provided 17 victims of trafficking assistance to return to their countries of origin. One NGO reported the government repatriated one trafficking victim in 2022 without screening her for trafficking, without recognizing her as a victim of trafficking.

In the prior reporting period, civil society noted unaccompanied children disappeared from asylum centers, often attempting to seek work. GRETA urged the government to address the lack of adequate accommodation and supervision for unaccompanied children and lack of a systematic approach in its 2019 report. Civil society criticized the government for not systematically referring foreign victims to services once identified and often shifting responsibility to the legal advisor. The victim's legal advisor could refer victims to NGOs for assistance, but the government did not offer financial support for victim assistance, according to an NGO. NGOs and GRETA continued to report asylum accommodations and psychological counseling in asylum centers were inappropriate and insufficient for assisting trafficking victims. NGOs reported some accommodations were no longer gender-sensitive, leading to increased harassment and decreased freedom of movement, particularly for female and LGBTQI+ individuals. The guide on accommodation requirements for asylum-seekers at federal asylum centers remained pending during the reporting period. The government reported victim services were only available to victims who experienced trafficking within Switzerland; however, NGOs argued there were exceptions to this policy under Article 17 of the Swiss Victim Aid Act, which were not uniformly applied. NGOs urged the government to enact improved 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, this had not passed by the end of the 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.

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. Trafficking victims could receive restitution from the trafficker through

criminal proceedings. In 2022, courts ordered restitution be paid to at least one victim. Still, GRETA and civil society 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. Additionally, the government did not report whether any victims brought suits and were consequently awarded damages in 2022 nor did the government report awarding compensation to any victims in 2022. Although the government continued to screen for trafficking victims, and had a legal provision prohibiting the punishment of victims of crime, NGOs asserted penalization of unidentified victims was common, 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. NGOs reported improvements in non-penalization of victims when the government increased its cooperation with civil society. 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. 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.

PREVENTION

The government increased prevention efforts. In December 2022, the Federal Council adopted a new anti-trafficking NAP for 2023-2027, which was drafted in collaboration with cantonal, municipal, and NGO representatives. The NAP focused on prioritizing labor trafficking, strengthening law enforcement, improving the support and rights of victims, victim identification, and training stakeholders. The NAP included well-defined actions and indicators of completion, designated entities responsible for each action item, and a monitoring body, but it did not include a specific budget for implementation. Under FedPol, FSMM coordinated national efforts, including anti-trafficking policies, information exchange, cooperation, and training. Following a 2018 restructuring of the FSMM, civil society and GRETA reported a decrease in a victim-centered, multidisciplinary, and collaborative approach to trafficking. In 2022, FSMM underwent another restructure, merging it with the organized crime unit of FedPol. 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 coordinating federal body led by FSMM, the National Expert Group to Combat Trafficking in Persons (NEGEM), convened its first meeting in 2022. In March 2022, FSMM held its national meeting of the heads of the cantonal anti-trafficking roundtables. The government remained without an official independent national anti-trafficking rapporteur. In 2022, the government continued to provide funding to an NGO to operate the national anti-trafficking hotline and allocated 53,125 Swiss francs (\$57,560); which was comparable to 51,600 Swiss francs (\$55,900) allocated in 2021; the NGO reported receiving 104 calls pertaining to 123 victims and referring 45 victims to police. NGOs noted increased calls to the hotline in 2022 as pandemic restrictions eased. Another government-funded NGO operated a 24-hour hotline police could use to refer trafficking victims to shelter and other victim protection services. Civil society reported FedPol commissioned an independent study on the effect of FedPol's grants for law enforcement measures to combat trafficking and crimes related to commercial sex; FedPol announced plans to increase funding for prevention in 2023 in response to the study's findings. The government reported funding awareness raising initiatives for more than 65,500 Swiss francs (\$70,960) in 2022; however, NGOs assessed that funding of awareness raising initiatives was insufficient. In collaboration with an NGO, the government funded awareness campaigns focused on victim identification in hospitals, and conducted awareness campaigns and workshops for labor inspectors, prosecutors, police, and NGOs on labor trafficking and victim identification. In November 2022, Switzerland joined the Schengen Information System (SIS), which includes preventative alerts for persons in need of protection, including potential trafficking victims. In 2022, as Ukrainian refugees fled Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the government used a temporary protective status to grant 75,000 Ukrainians asylum as of May 2023. SEM developed an awareness campaign on the risks of trafficking for Ukrainian refugees, in multiple languages, but did not consult civil society in its development. Two government-funded reports were published in 2022; one assessed combating human trafficking in the cantonal context and the other focused on child trafficking. In December 2022, SEM adopted a new action plan on migration, including anti-human trafficking, with 60 countries from Europe and Africa. In September 2022, more than 10 civil society organizations and several hundred protestors organized a rally in Bern to demonstrate their concern that efforts to combat human trafficking in Switzerland were insufficient.

Insufficient personnel and resources hampered in-depth labor inspections; additionally, civil society reported labor inspectors frequently regarded foreign victims as criminals working illegally. Labor inspectors lacked a specific mandate to identify trafficking victims; however, if inspectors did identify any potential victims, they were required to refer potential trafficking cases to police. The government reported training courses for labor inspectors in several

cantons. 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, 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, who are admitted under certain conditions, required prior 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 organized multistakeholder events and conducted 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. In January 2022, the Swiss Parliament enacted a new law, which came into force in January 2023, which requires 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.

The government continued to provide funding to NGOs and foreign countries for anti-trafficking efforts, including in Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, to the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, and to OSCE prevention efforts among Ukrainian refugees, including a rapid assessment of human trafficking trends in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine. The government also continued to provide funding to Nigeria's anti-trafficking efforts and supported its NAP, adopted in April 2022, and a prevention project in Nigeria. The government also 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. Media reported the arrest of a Swiss national suspected of child sex tourism in Madagascar. The government participated in several international law enforcement efforts to increase government and law enforcement collaboration on child sex tourism, and operated a whistleblower website, the government did not demonstrate overall efforts to reduce the demand for international child sex tourism by Swiss nationals or permanent residents, despite allegations of such actions by its citizens. The government reported training its diplomats and its peacekeepers on trafficking in persons.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Switzerland. The pandemic exacerbated vulnerabilities for trafficking victims and sex traffickers are increasingly using online platforms to recruit, exploit victims, and book apartment rentals to make their illicit operations difficult to track. Experts report the ban on commercial sex in some cantons during the pandemic created a higher risk of trafficking, making trafficking harder to detect. Traffickers increasingly target and exploit victims online and online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) is increasing. Victims' debt to their traffickers, and subsequently the traffickers' control over the victims, increased during the pandemic because victims were sometimes unable to work and earn money. Following the pandemic, authorities noted an increase in escorts, which made monitoring for sex trafficking more difficult as victims move locations rather than staying in one establishment. Refugees, predominantly women and children, fleeing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, are vulnerable to trafficking. Swiss authorities did not report significant trafficking trends among Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland, although one NGO received reports of Ukrainian refugees being exploited for labor. 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 typically have the same nationality as their victims. Although the vast majority of traffickers are male, female traffickers are not uncommon, especially women from Nigeria and Thailand. Traffickers are increasingly mobile and adaptable, switching industries and locations frequently. Sex traffickers exploit both foreign and domestic women, transgender individuals, 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 exploit Vietnamese victims in the nail industry. Swiss nationals continue to engage in child sex tourism abroad. Authorities report an increase in young male traffickers, known as "lover boys," coercing vulnerable Swiss girls and women into sex trafficking, often through a sham romantic relationship. The majority of sex trafficking victims identified by the government are from Eastern Europe; West Africa, notably Nigeria; and Asia, particularly Thailand. Traffickers continue to fraudulently recruit and later coerce Nigerian women and girls to stay in exploitative situations using a "voodoo oath" they are forced to swear. Foreign trafficking victims originate primarily from Central and Eastern Europe (particularly Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania) with increasing numbers from Asia and Africa (especially from the People's Republic of China [PRC], Nigeria, and Thailand),

but also from Latin America (Brazil and the Dominican Republic). Cantonal authorities note an increasing number of potential sex trafficking victims from the PRC. Traffickers often force female victims among asylum-seekers from Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Nigeria into commercial sex 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, tourism, and in forced criminal activity. Male victims among asylum-seekers come primarily from Afghanistan and Eritrea and are exploited in forced labor. Forced begging, especially among the Roma communities, has increased in recent years.

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