



Mind the Gap Report: COALESCE for Support in LITHUANIA

Needs analysis for the integration of migrant female victims of
trafficking for sexual exploitation/abuse



Funded by the European Union's
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund



KLAIPEDA SOCIAL AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL
SERVICES CENTER

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Funding

This report was funded by the European Union's Asylum Migration and Integration Fund.

Coalesce project

This report is produced for the EU funded initiative "COALESCE: Legal, Psycho-social and economic empowerment for the integration of women third country nationals (TCN) victims of human trafficking (VoT) for sexual exploitation and abuse" (Coalesce Project EC AMIF: 958133), led by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) (Cyprus), in partnership with the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) (Ireland), Caritas Cyprus, Cyprus Refugee Council, SOLWODI (Germany), Associazione Iroko Onlus (Italy), Association, Marta Centre (Latvia), Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre (KSPSC) (Lithuania), and European Network of Migrant Women - a European platform based in Belgium.

Coalesce works to support victims of trafficking in human beings: providing gender-specific psycho-social, legal and economic support and assistance to third-country national women victims of sex trafficking, and to develop synergies and complementarities in facilitating needs identification, assistance and support, and improve transnational cooperation among front line professionals and practitioners. Coalesce's aim is to place the voices and authentic opinions of trafficked women at the centre of implementation.

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Acknowledgements

Special gratitude is expressed to
Psychologist Olga Ivanec

Julia Zorb

Egle Puidokaite

Victims of trafficking that provided interviews for the research.

Lithuanian Red Cross Society, Klaipeda Branch

Disclaimer

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Introduction

Short overview of the COALESCE project

This report is produced in the framework of a transnational project entitled "COALESCE: Legal, Psycho-social and economic empowerment for the integration of women third country nationals (TCN) victims of human trafficking (VoT) for sexual exploitation and abuse» (Coalesce Project EC AMIF: 958133). The COALESCE Project is funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and implemented by a partnership consortium comprising the lead partner [Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies](#) (Cyprus), [Cyprus Refugee Council](#), [CARITAS Cyprus](#), [IROKO Onlus](#) (Italy), [Marta Centre](#) (Latvia), [European Network of Migrant Women](#), [Immigrant Council Ireland](#), [Solwodi](#) (Germany), [Klapeda Social and Psychological Support Centre](#) (Lithuania).

The objective of the project is to provide support to the female migrant victims of trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation in Europe. By providing gender-specific psycho-social, legal and economic support and assistance to third-country national women victims of sex trafficking, the project seeks to develop synergies and complementarities in facilitating needs identification, assistance and support, and improve transnational cooperation among front line professionals and practitioners.

There is a well-documented and acknowledged link between the assistance that the victims need and other factors such as their gender, the specific form of exploitation they have suffered, and their residence status (Directive 2011/36/EU). In fact, female victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation often have very complex needs (European Commission, Study on the Gender Dimension of Trafficking in Human Beings, 2016; EIGE, Gender-specific Measures in Anti-trafficking Actions, 2018). Thus, the gendered nature of human trafficking, as a form of gender-based violence, is a fundamental element of COALESCE's conceptualisation and work programme. In responding to the priorities of the AMIF (5), the project focuses on the implications of the migration developments, within a context of protracted uncertainty and exacerbated social inequalities caused by the Covid-19 pandemic that affect the most vulnerable victims of human trafficking, in particular migrant women and children.

Specifically, the workplan of COALESCE project involves:

- The provision of assistance guided by a **Gender Specific Integration Model (GeSIM)** for legal, psycho-social assistance and economic empowerment to enhance integration of women TCN VoT.
- The development of a **practical working toolkit** enhanced by input from affected women, **distilling specialized knowledge and recommendations** for a sustainable gender-specific implementation of EU guidelines and tools, **influencing the work of service providers** (including asylum authorities).

- The promotion of **national and transnational knowledge exchange** between relevant actors on the benefits of and commitment to GESIM. Nurturing collaborative approaches benefitting trafficked women.
- The improvement of the **capacity of victim support organisations** across the EU to provide **gender-specific support services** (incl. psycho-social, legal and economic empowerment) tailored to the needs of migrant women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation/abuse contributing also to their early identification.

Finally, taking into consideration all available protection measures in the framework established by the Anti-Trafficking Directive 2011/36/EU, this project seeks to enhance best knowledge exchange on the integration of trafficked victims, among the consortium which brings together a diverse group of feminist organisations with a particular expertise in supporting trafficked migrant women recovering from sexual violence and exploitation.

The Mind the Gap Report

The purpose of this report is to present a mapping and analysis of needs for the support to and integration of female third country national victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (TCN VoTs) in six EU (European Union) Member States: Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania and Latvia. The analysis adopts a victim-centred and gender-specific approach by directly involving those affected in the mapping and assessment of existing local support mechanisms to identify areas of gender-specific intervention within the areas: 1) psycho-social support; 2) legal support; and 3) building economic independence (economic empowerment).

Specifically, this report aims at providing a state-of-the-art and relevant information with regards the gaps in assistance and support available in the countries under review, from the perspectives of victims of VoTs for sexual exploitation.

The report comprises a short overview of the project, the legal and policy context at EU and national level, followed by an analysis of the key themes and needs identified through in-depth interviews and/or focus groups carried out in Lithuania with female TCN VoTs for sexual exploitation.

Methodology

The Coalesce consortium have adopted a common methodology to ensure coherence of the mapping and analysis of needs across the partner countries. The results of this context mapping and needs analysis feed directly into the design and development of Gender-Specific Integration Models (GESIM) - (Work Package 3 of the Coalesce Project)- a handbook/guidelines comprising of Psychosocial & legal support model (PLM) and Economic

empowerment model (EEM) for TCN women VoTs. The interlinkage of this needs analysis with the Gender-Specific Integration Models (GESIM) ensures consistent inclusion of VoTs voices and perspectives in the integration interventions that will be produced, implemented and evaluated in the course of the Coalesce Project.¹

The methods used for this research report include:

Desk research, including a) legislation, b) policies, c) academic and other research reports, and d) government reports and reports published by EU and other international institutions, in order to collect up-to-date information on current support and integration provisions available for women TCN VoTs affected by trafficking for sexual exploitation in the different national/local contexts. The analysis will build upon existing EU analysis of gender-specific measures on trafficking to help merge the micro with the macro level.²

The Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre contacted the Lithuanian Red Cross Information Centre in Klaipeda, who works with persons from Third Countries, including victims of human trafficking. For the purposes of the study, four women from Third Countries who are trying to integrate in Lithuania were invited to interview. The migrants came from Nigeria, Russia and Armenia. Four in-depth interviews were conducted in order to find out the direct experiences and opinions of immigrant women about the existing assistance and integration measures that could enable third-country women to integrate more effectively in Lithuania.

For the purposes of this project, the identification of the gender-specific needs and areas of intervention focus on economic, legal and psychosocial empowerment.

In this regard, the available knowledge to date was incorporated through the screening of the EU legislation and policies, EU studies, EIGE studies, EU anti-trafficking website library, relevant project reports and build on the findings of our colleague practitioners – such as SOLWODI and ICI that worked in the ASSIST project that identified best practice principles in delivering gender-specific assistance.³

Psychosocial and legal support indicators

The provision of gender-specific psycho-social, legal services aiding the integration of TCN victims of trafficking include holistic psychological and social support, as well as legal representation. These forms of support are linked to the experiences of women victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation and other forms of violence against women.

¹ This approach also facilitates transnational knowledge exchange and learning, as well as the promotion of the GESIM and its direct benefits for women TCN VoTs for sexual exploitation.

² Yonkova et al., 2017.

³ Thomson and Yonkova, 2020.

Specifically, these indicators as adapted from the ASSIST Project⁴ involve: “the identification and recognition as a victim of trafficking; obtaining and/or renewal of the necessary immigration permits; international protection related matters; any other immigration related matters, as well as criminal matters.” Specific focus is added but not limited to: “family related matters; securing access to appropriate housing (provision of shelters and protected flats); medical assistance; compensation; access to material assistance; psychological support; other integration initiatives”.⁵

Economic independence indicators

The concept of women’s economic independence recognises that women are economic actors who contribute to economic activity and should be able to benefit from it on an equal basis with men, and that financial independence can have an important role in strengthening the position of women in society and within the household. Economic independence refers to a condition where women and men have their own access to the full range of economic opportunities and resources – including employment, services, and sufficient disposable income – so they can shape and exercise control over their lives, meet their own needs and those of their dependants, and make conscious choices.⁶

Economic empowerment is understood within the framework of enabling economic independence and includes but is not limited to these indicative themes and indicators: employment opportunities; education and professional training (job orientation training and access to entrepreneurship, business plans, access to resources); resource mobilisation and funding schemes (start-ups, small business); access to technology / digital skills; mentoring; care services; welfare and social benefits; housing and transportation services; direct or indirect financial services.

To conclude, the three pillars of intervention – psychosocial, legal and economic empowerment – are understood as taking place in complementarity with counselling which is defined as follows:

Counselling is a multidisciplinary approach in which refugee women who have been victims of gender-based violence are offered a multitude of support, including psycho-social counselling, information on their rights and assistance in fulfilling their everyday needs. The aim of counselling is to support clients in different areas of life, not just with incidents connected with gender-based violence. The counselling process can take months or even years and it intersects with several other processes to which asylum seekers and victims of violence can be part of: the asylum process, criminal process

⁴ Yonkova, N. et al., 2020. Assist Project.

⁵ Ibid, p. 36.

⁶ Pesce and Christodoulou, 2017.

*and civil law processes such as divorce, family unification or custody of children. Counselling is in practice a series of one-on-one sessions where refugee women are given an opportunity to be heard and to tell their story. Together with the counsellor a spectrum of opportunities are jointly discovered. Women are informed about their rights as victims of crime and as asylum seekers. Their practical needs such as sustenance, housing and medical needs are mapped and, when needed, they are referred to other service providers. At a more in-depth level, counsellors describe counselling as a process of moving from shame, fear and self-blame to building confidence, empowerment and integration.*⁷ (Lilja, 2019: 43).

EU Policy Context

Trafficking in human beings (THB) in the EU is a major problem, which shows no signs of decreasing.⁸ Trafficking continues to be a key threat in the European Union (EU), while trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation is the most widely spread form of exploitation.⁹ Female victims represent 77% of all victims, while trafficking sexual exploitation represents 65% of the overall registered trafficking crime.¹⁰ The statistics available mandate particular attention to trafficking of women on the one hand and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation on the other. THB, which is a form of violence against women,¹¹ is a highly gendered crime not only due to the statistical information available but also due to facts surrounding the severe, long-term consequences and harms to women who have been exploited for the purposes of sexual exploitation, according to the Study on the Gender Dimension of THB.¹² Their recovery needs require significant investment and may take extended periods of time, therefore planning for and organising the efficient recovery and re-integration programmes are of paramount importance.

The recommendations of the Study on the gender dimension of THB (EC, 2016), the report Gender-specific measures in anti-trafficking actions (EIGE, 2018) and the Anti-trafficking Directive 2011/36/EU, the assistance offered to such women must be appropriate to their gender, age and the form of exploitation. To that effect, the Commission commits to support efforts geared at 'comprehensive and accessible protection and help the reintegration of victims of trafficking, taking account of the specific needs of each gender'.¹³ Therefore, programmes utilising the latest advancement in the knowledge of the gender-specific

⁷ Lilja, 2019, p. 43.

⁸ EC second progress report, 2018.

⁹ Europol, 2021.

¹⁰ EC progress report, 2018. Based on EU stats excluding the UK data

¹¹ EU/29/2012, Istanbul Convention 2012.

¹² EC, 2016.

¹³ EC Communication, 2017.

integration needs and efficient approaches to supporting the recovery of trafficked women represent a clear rationale for action in present times in the EU.

The phenomenon of human trafficking has been greatly shaped by and entangled with significant migration flows into and within the EU. In 2018 for example, Europol reported that organised criminal groups involved in THB often exploit existing migratory routes to traffic victims into and within the EU.¹⁴ Similar to the Commission Staff working document (EC, 2018), the same Europol report exposes the nexus between asylum and human trafficking, which has been also in the focus of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) for the last few years. Frontex¹⁵ finds a significant increase in the number of Nigerian women and girls (increasingly minors) in mixed migration flows to Italy, intended for supply to the European sex market. Similarly, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported a 600% increase, in a three-year period, of the number of potential female victims primarily from Nigeria, with an estimated percent of victims of trafficking among them reaching 80%. Despite of these facts and knowledge, trafficking of women for sexual exploitation has not become a priority in many EU Member States and many women remain not identified.¹⁶ Despite the insufficient identification efforts, including in the asylum process, it is clear that a sizeable proportion of the sex-trafficking victims registered in the EU are TCN women. This adds a layer of complexity in the response to them due to their immigration status, cultural specificity, limited eligibility to general state-funded services, lack of support networks, increasing racism and xenophobia, making the integration assistance demanding and simultaneously requiring gender-specificity, violence against women expertise as well as intersectional competence.

National Context

More and more third-country nationals come to Lithuania every year. In 2017 the Department of Migration issued 82,291 temporary residence permits to those who found work, In 2018 - 12 4762, in 2019 - 24 9493, and in 2020 - 26 6104. In the last three years, the number of people coming to Lithuania and wanting to work here has tripled.¹⁷

NGOs providing social assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings and exploitation of prostitution in Lithuania are joining together in the National Association against Trafficking in Human Beings, organising themselves and their partners into a network and starting to coordinate their activities. This has enabled synergies to be created, more meaningful and effective use to be made of state budget allocations for social assistance, and more innovative working tools and methodologies to be found and applied. Coordinated networking allows

¹⁴ Europol, 2018.

¹⁵ Risk analysis report, 2018.

¹⁶ EC, 2018.

¹⁷ Bielevičiūtė I., Trumpytė R. *Imigrantų integracija į darbo rinką - kaip sekasi Lietuvai?*, 2021.

for the standardisation of services and procedures for the same category of persons and for the acceleration of service delivery through the sharing economy, through the exchange of resources and competences. As a result, the goals of the National Association against Trafficking in Human Beings were set:

- To mobilise the Association's members for cohesive and coordinated action.
- To work in a coordinated manner to adequately address the problems of trafficking in human beings and modern slavery and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, including gender-based violence, as provided for in international, European Union and national legislation.
- Guarantee to victims or potential victims of trafficking in human beings' equal access to and quality of comprehensive assistance.
- Raise awareness among members of society to achieve zero tolerance of human trafficking and modern slavery¹⁸.

Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre is also a member of the National Association Against Human Trafficking. The Centre, together with other organisations in the Association, implements the following activities:

- provision and/or organisation of social services and temporary accommodation for target groups;
- psychological, legal, health care, educational assistance provided and/or organised for the project's target groups;
- other social assistance provided and organised according to the needs of the persons concerned, such as assistance during pre-trial and trial investigations, employment and job placement, and processing of personal documents;
- preventive activities, public information and education.

According to the National Rapporteur on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Republic of Lithuania Review of the Anti-Trafficking Situation in Lithuania in 2020 data¹⁹, in 2020, comprehensive assistance was provided or organised for 208 victims or potential victims of trafficking in human beings: 112 men and 96 women. Of these assisted persons, 78 persons (34 men and 38 women) are recognised as victims of trafficking in human beings and 136 persons (78 men and 58 women) are considered as victims of trafficking in human beings (as identified by NGOs) and may have been trafficked. The age groups most often receiving psychosocial assistance were 21-50 years old. Out of the 208 persons who received psychosocial assistance, 73 persons (33 men and 40 women) who were victims of trafficking in human beings and 21 persons (5 men and 16 women) who may have been victims of trafficking in human beings were granted temporary residence permits in Lithuania. It should

¹⁸ Šakočius A., *Activity Report of the National Anti-Trafficking Association, 2020*

¹⁹ Mickutė S., *Review of the Anti-Trafficking Situation in Lithuania in 2020*, National Rapporteur on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of The Interior, 2021

be noted that only 1 temporary residence permit was issued to a victim of trafficking in human beings or forced labour who cooperated with the pre-trial investigation body or the court - a Colombian national who may have been trafficked for sexual exploitation, she belongs to the age group of 31-40 years.²⁰

In the context of Lithuania's social problems, trafficking in human beings stands out as one of the most complex problems, both in terms of latency and residual effects. Lithuanian citizens are trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour and services, crime, pornography and marriages of convenience. New forms of trafficking in human beings are constantly emerging, such as the exploitation of minors for illegal fighting and the exploitation of women for surrogacy. People are not always clear that they have been trafficked and do not always seek help, often because they do not know where to turn or do not think that anyone can help. Victims are not covered by the witness protection programme and their fear and insecurity are often justified. Victims tend to be the most vulnerable (socially, psychologically and spiritually) members of society. It is noted that social risk groups such as children in orphanages, children with special needs and young people are most at risk. There are no neighbourhoods where the threats and risks of human trafficking are not visible. It is still difficult to determine the prevalence of trafficking in human beings among those entering the country from third countries, but it is clear that the majority of victims of trafficking need immediate and comprehensive assistance for rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

²⁰ Mickutė S., *2020 metų kovos su prekyba žmonėmis situacijos Lietuvoje apžvalga*. Lietuvos Respublikos nacionalinis pranešėjas kovos su prekyba žmonėmis klausimais, Vidaus reikalų ministerija, 2021, p. 15.

Chapter One - Psychosocial Support

Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation providing complex psychosocial assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings, prostitution, domestic violence (women with children, young people, families), as well as to Third Country nationals. The vision of the Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre is to keep women, children and all family members socially and psychologically safe. In order to meet the social security and mental health needs of children, young people, women and families the Centre provides professional support from specialists and trained volunteers. The aim of the assistance provided is to empower trafficked/prostituted women so that they can make a well-articulated, autonomous decision about their future life and to be able to control the situation and the circumstances in order to achieve their desired goal, thereby helping themselves and other women towards a better quality of life in the future. The assistance provided by the centre includes mediation in obtaining temporary accommodation, social, psychological and legal counselling, psychotherapeutic support, mediation in arranging the necessary documents, restoring relations with other family members, obtaining the necessary qualifications or finding a job. In addition, the Centre promotes civic responsibility among members of society. The Centre provides assistance to individuals in cooperation with national and international NGOs, other institutions and organisations in the country, including the Klaipeda City Municipality Department of Social Services. Assistance for women, victims of trafficking in Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre in 2020 was provided to 22 women who were trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced marriage.

In order to integrate migrant women from third countries who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation / abuse, an analysis of their needs was carried out by interviewing them.

All the women interviewed had benefited from the assistance available to TCNs when they arrived in Lithuania. Types of assistance they requested:

- psychological assistance: *"Psychological counselling and everything else"* (Interview 1), *"[...] I received individual free psychological counselling [...]"* (Interview 4);
- attendance at psychological seminars: *"Oh no, I attended general group psychological seminars"*(2 interviews);
- legal assistance: *"And the lawyer's advice is free once a month"* (4 interviews);
- Lithuanian language courses: *"They immediately told me to go to this centre because here I will be able to learn Lithuanian and all the other information you need will be given here [...]"* (2 interviews);
- translation help: *"It means a lot when you know that you can get help anytime, even with simple translation"* (2 interviews);
- help with paperwork and getting information about institutions: *"[...] they can tell you what documents are needed for insurance"* (2 interviews), *"[...] helped with driving*

licences, so that you have a licence for half a year and then you have to change it. [...] Then they told you to join the stock exchange" (interview 3);

- social assistance: *'Social assistance mostly'* (3 interviews).

The most frequent requests were for psychological, legal aid and Lithuanian language courses. This shows that the women needed legal knowledge, the ability to communicate in Lithuanian and psychological support to integrate, as integration was not easy emotionally. However, some women received psychological support from relatives, not only from institutions: *"Yes, I have my mother and my brother there (in Armenia). Everything is there. On the psychological side, I get a lot of psychological support from there"* (Interview 4).

Considering the current situation in Lithuania and the experience of other Nordic-Baltic and other European countries, there are strong indications that there may be an increasing trend of sham marriages with persons from third countries in order to obtain citizenship of a European Union country. Moreover, it is likely that the Republic of Lithuania may move from being a transit country for trafficking in human beings to becoming a destination country of choice for third-country nationals²¹. Sexual exploitation may also increase with the rise of exploitation for sham marriages. It has been noted that third-country nationals are increasingly coming to Lithuania to work illegally, which increases the risk that persons in Lithuania illegally will be exploited not only for forced labour but also for sexual exploitation.

According to the data of the Ministry of the Interior²² (2021), in 2020, the largest number of illegally employed third-country nationals was found in the following sectors of economic activity: the construction sector (250 persons), the transport sector (56 persons) and the manufacturing sector (15 persons). It should be noted that the majority of the identified foreigners worked in the construction sector, which remains the riskiest sector in the country, both in terms of illegal employment and occupational safety and health.

There is also a tendency that third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings are increasingly working without employment contracts concluded in accordance with the established procedure and are engaged in unregistered individual activities with natural persons. Ukrainians working illegally with Lithuanian natural persons are most often found to be Ukrainians who have entered the Republic of Lithuania on their own initiative, taking advantage of the visa waiver regime.

This trend increases the risk that Lithuania may become a country where trafficking in human beings may become complex, ranging from illegal work to theft, other criminal acts and sexual exploitation, all of which will be experienced by the same person. This can lead to even greater exclusion of third country nationals.

²¹ Ministry of the Interior, 2021, p. 24.

²² Ibid, p. 19.

Third-country nationals living, working and seeking to integrate in Lithuania become part of society, but this is not always the case. In order to ensure a smooth integration process for migrants, it is important not only to ask migrants to try to integrate into society, but also to be ready to welcome them and to provide them with all the information they need. Successful integration is a two-way process of communication between both migrants and the host society²³. Women from third countries who are victims of trafficking are particularly vulnerable and are wary of their social environment, which can again complicate their integration in Lithuania, as well as their acceptance by society.

The women surveyed who came from Third Countries feel the need to interact with citizens or compatriots living in Lithuania and try to expand their social environment: *"When I stayed for 6 months, I met people here. I met people here, some of them from Nigeria. [...] It was nice to meet them"* (Interview 1), *"I'm really in favour of groups, clubs, for example, just for Russian speakers, so that people get together and socialize and make more friends, make more acquaintances, so that you just socialize"* (Interview 3), *"Well, from the Lithuanian language courses there are 2-3 girls that I talk to, but they are not Lithuanians either, and there is one Lithuanian girl with whom we speak Russian, we try to speak Lithuanian too"* (interview 4), but these women are not always successful in making close friends: *"I don't manage to find them"* (interview 3). Women shared that interacting with people living in Lithuania gave them the opportunity to learn more about adapting to the Lithuanian climate: *"They took care of me, told me how to warm my hands and cheeks. They gave me tips on what to do when it is so cold: drink more tea, coffee, dress warmer. I had no idea how to dress warmer. I used to put on a jacket, but it was not enough, I had to wear more clothes"* (Interview 1), they had the opportunity to get to know the people better: *"Because here people are every man for himself, there is a lack of commonality"* (Interview 3). So somehow it seemed to me that there are different people here" (Interview 2).

Third-country nationals, also known as settlers, want to integrate successfully into Lithuanian society, but some of them face prejudiced stereotypes and negative attitudes, and Lithuanian society opposes their arrival, identifying them as a threat to security and national identity, as they may differ in culture and appearance from the local population. Immigrants not only face a lack of tolerance from society, but also from trade unions, which are opposed to third-country nationals coming to work in Lithuania. Immigration in Lithuania raises legal, labour market, multiculturalism (language and cultural differences), social assistance and other issues. This is a new challenge for Lithuania, as modern Lithuania has always been characterised by demographic purity and a strong sense of national identity, and therefore

²³ International Organisation for Migration, 2009.

globalisation is becoming an increasing challenge for the country, both in demographic, cultural, social and educational aspects.²⁴

Three out of four women surveyed had experienced discrimination for various reasons. Of these, one woman experienced discrimination at work, on the basis of pay. Because she was not very aware of the wage system, she was paid less than Lithuanians for the same job: *"There is discrimination in the workplace because of wages, because they are paid less than Lithuanians"* (Interview 1). The same woman faced racist attitudes: *"A woman came up to me. She said, what are you black girls doing here? She said to go to your country, what are you doing here, and she spoke in Russian"* (Interview 1). Another woman was also a source of frustration for the Lithuanians because of her appearance and even called the police on her: *"Somehow there are two very nice people, but they treat me strangely. Maybe it's because I have black hair. Even once in a shop they called the police on me because I had stolen something, even though I hadn't stolen anything"* (Interview 4). The women felt most discriminated against because of language. According to them, Lithuanians are not always willing to speak another language, and they usually get angry if the newcomers do not speak Lithuanian, and then Lithuanians may deliberately speak Lithuanian or even ignore them: *"I couldn't even say anything in Lithuanian or English, so they criticized me without looking at the first child, and then they started to attack me, saying that if you are living in Lithuania, you have to speak in Lithuanian"* (2 interviews), *"All Lithuanians attacked me because I don't speak Lithuanian and I speak the language of the occupier. I don't know, but I speak it as best I can. I am Armenian, not Russian"* (4 interviews). This shows that the problem of discrimination or racism is still an issue in Lithuania, which is exactly what foreigners face when they want to integrate in Lithuania. Such experiences of third-country women victims of human trafficking may be a barrier to seeking help from organisations, as the perception may be that not knowing the language, not being a Lithuanian citizen, will lead to a condescending attitude towards the victims' experiences and the help provided.

Social sensitivity is particularly important when providing assistance to victims, as we are dealing with people who have certain stigmas due to negative stereotypes in society. Psychological care and healthcare are provided as a part of social assistance for the victims of human trafficking. Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre provides psychological, legal and medical crisis assistance. They also offer rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for sexually exploited or trafficked women.

In terms of social health, the General Programme for Health Education approved by Order No V-1290 of Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 31 August 2012 defines pupils' achievements (attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding) and the scope

²⁴ Popova, M. *Current situation and perspectives of integration of third country immigrants into Lithuania*. Research paper. 2011.

of content in the area of prevention of risky behaviour in primary, basic and secondary education.²⁵

The women interviewed revealed the emotional difficulties they faced in integrating in Lithuania. *"Many people are afraid to share their experiences of integration because they don't know much about it, they don't know what the feedback will be like, or if the outcome will not be what you expect. They are afraid to share information because they don't know if their confidentiality, their names and their information will be violated. [...] I was lost, I was crying"* (Interview 1), stress: *"Well, maybe we were mixing for him, so I had a lot of stress two months ago"* (Interview 4), anger: *"Well, yes, it annoys me morally"* (Interview 4), tension: *"Because I say the last three months have been very stressful for me. I thought I was going crazy"* (Interview 4), sadness: *"I'm really sad, I'm really hurt"* (Interview 4), *"Of course there was a moment when I cried because of the language barrier, but I didn't have any such thoughts that I would like to leave"* (Interview 3), longing for communication: *"I miss very much communication because I'm a very social person"* (Interview 3), psychological violence: *"It's like a psychological violence. Because when I went to them people were crying, they were making people hysterical, humiliating, giving false information"* (interview 2), *"I don't see any reason to attack me, but people are looking for reasons to attack me, to say something, especially because of the Lithuanian language"* (interview 4). This shows that it was difficult to adapt emotionally in Lithuania. Women did not feel safe and were vulnerable. However, some managed to adapt emotionally: *"Somehow I don't look at things so easily anymore"* (4 interviews), *"Now I want to integrate again"* (2 interviews).

Different perspectives can be used to look at how family circumstances affect migration. One of them is that a common reason for migration is a marriage between a citizen of the Republic of Lithuania and a citizen of a foreign country. Often, third-country nationals who legally reside and work in Lithuania bring their family members with them. The arrival of family members to live in Lithuania is called family reunification.²⁶ It is assumed that the integration of third-country trafficked women is facilitated when they have a close relationship with their family or if they have any relatives or friends in a foreign country.

Not all of the women surveyed had relatives in Lithuania when they arrived. Some were completely alone: *"2 brothers, 1 sister, 4 children in the family. I am the second child. First brother, me, brother, sister. They all live in Nigeria"* (Interview 1), while others had relatives who had moved to Lithuania before: *"Yes, he is Russian, his mother is only Lithuanian, his father is Russian. Everyone in the family speaks Russian. And all the other relatives, starting with my grandfather's mother, are all Lithuanians"* (Interview 3), *"And why did I come to Lithuania, because my dad has been living here for more than 30 years"* (Interview 4), and the others who came here were married to Lithuanian citizens: *"I met a guy here and I got married"*

²⁵ GRETA, 2018, p. 19.

²⁶ International Organisation for Migration, 2009.

to a Lithuanian" (Interview 4). One of the women also came to study: *"I was interested in studying and came to Klaipeda University to study nursing"* (1 interview), but there were no relatives around. And one. Others moved to Lithuania with their family in search of better living conditions: *"Before I came to LT, my husband and I were divorced, so I came with my three children and my mother"* (interview 2). However, regardless of whether there were relatives or not, the adaptation in Lithuania still took a lot of effort and was not without its challenges, but the presence of relatives helped more emotionally.

The integration of third-country nationals is a multifaceted process, involving both overcoming intercultural differences and resistance from the Lithuanian community. Considering the closed and conservative nature of Lithuanian society, it is necessary at the state level to consolidate migration as a phenomenon of opportunities rather than a threat, and to implement measures to promote tolerance and multiculturalism in Lithuanian society. Immigrants tend to get acquainted with Lithuanian culture, traditions and customs, as they are constantly confronted with various cultural differences that surprise them while living in Lithuania.²⁷

The women who shared their integration experiences were from Nigeria, Russia (two) and Armenia. They all felt the cultural difference between their country and Lithuania. One woman said that when you come to Lithuania, it is good to get to know the rules and the cultural differences because it gives you security: *"In my country it is different from here. There are cultural differences, what you can do, what you can't do and so on. It is good to know the rules. Because you come from abroad, you don't know the rules. You don't know how to do things, what to do. Because you don't know, you live in fear. You don't feel safe when you don't know the culture. You don't want to disturb others"* (Interview 1). Another woman was amazed by the care of the Lithuanian people for nature, cleanliness, order and found the people and their lifestyle acceptable: *"[...] I like the people, the life style, the culture, how beautiful everything is, how they take care of nature, the relationship I respect it very much. I like it and I respect it. The way they treat the city (the attitude towards the city), even tourists are amazed by the cleanliness of the city, it's unreal clean, you have a lot of flowers, how nice and tidy"* (interview 2). Another woman felt a difference in thinking when it comes to the issue of comfort: *"People think differently here. I can ask somebody for advice, but whether I will use it, maybe not. People live differently here and think and see situations differently. I see situations differently. Well, for example, when we came here, we were told to rent an apartment near the school so that we don't have to drive every morning. Well, we rented, but I'd rather live further away, but in my own house with all the amenities"* (Interview 3), and the mentality itself: *"He (the husband) might find it difficult to get along with men here because of the difference in mentality. Because the rest of us are more open, but it depends on the person"* (Interview 3). The importance of the Lithuanian language for Lithuanians is also very clear, especially they like when foreigners speak Lithuanian, and if they don't, Lithuanians can

²⁷ Tauragės verslo informacinis centras, 2008.

be very cruel to other Lithuanians: *"Once I posted an ad on Facebook that I am looking for a job, no matter what, it would be better if I could work as an engineer's assistant, so that I can get closer to my specialty, and if not, just any kind of job. Then all the Lithuanians attacked me because I don't speak Lithuanian and I speak the language of the occupier"* (Interview 4). Every woman tends to adapt to cultural differences, but at the same time tries to keep her own identity and culture.

After reviewing the psychosocial difficulties of integration of third-country nationals in Lithuania, it can be stated that the majority of third-country victims of trafficking in human beings need immediate and comprehensive assistance for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Firstly, by providing the necessary emotional, psychological and social support, often safe temporary accommodation, meeting basic needs, followed by rehabilitation, restoring social skills, internal personal qualities and helping to regain or acquire work skills, education, a profession, thus strengthening the chances of integrating into the labour market and the society. Without adequate support, the victim or person at risk remains extremely vulnerable, at risk of violence and re-exploitation. The monitoring of the results of social services shows that reintegration services are insufficient and not always tailored to individual needs. The variety of identified and predictable cases suggests that the package of social services should be more diversified, taking into account the individual needs of the victim.

Chapter Two - Legal Support

The migration of people from one place to another is a natural global phenomenon. Lithuania, like other countries in the European Union, is open to population migration. Today, this is a particularly important issue not only in Lithuania but also in other European Union countries. In recent decades, a very large number of people have left Lithuania and been taken by more economically developed countries. Currently, Lithuania is a country where emigration is predominant and immigration is low.²⁸ Nevertheless, third-country nationals do not escape the trap of human trafficking.

International and European Union legal acts laying down the principles of assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings and response to possible trafficking in human beings are sufficiently specified in Lithuanian national law. Lithuania's efforts to combat trafficking in human beings have been recognised by international observers.²⁹ Public awareness of the threats and risks of trafficking in human beings is increasing. However, the issue of trafficking and exploitation of third country nationals and Lithuanians abroad in Lithuania remains a threatening one due to its high latency. Insufficient sustainability of social assistance and preventive measures, manifested in recidivism of trafficking or exploitation, as well as secondary victimisation. Therefore, the comprehensive model of psychosocial services and legal assistance for victims of trafficking in human beings, exploitation for prostitution and for persons who have been and may become victims of trafficking in human beings, needs to be improved by focusing on the individual needs of the victim, sustainable, coordinated and effective action, effectively complemented by innovation, proactive prevention and public information and education. Women victims of trafficking in third countries can receive legal and other psychosocial assistance regardless of whether they are victims or potential victims of trafficking.

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania finances projects for the support and reintegration of victims of human trafficking through the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.³⁰ Special projects from specialized NGOs receive funding that can offer necessary assistance for victims of human trafficking such as psychological, medical, housing, legal counselling, and so on.

As of April 2019, the European Union recognizes that the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania administers the Fund of Crimes and provides state-guaranteed legal aid³¹.

²⁸ Ščerbuk, J. *Management of Immigration Processes in Lithuania, State and Prospects*, 2015.

²⁹ GRETA and US State Department assessments.

³⁰ European Commission. Lithuania – 3. Implementation of anti-trafficking policy.

³¹ GRETA, 2018, p. 9.

The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania

- accepts and processes requests to compensate damage caused by violent crimes that were committed after 01.07.2005,
- provides primary legal aid, which includes legal information and legal advice provided under the procedure set forth by the law and the drafting of documents to be submitted to state and municipal institutions, except for procedural documents,
- provides secondary legal aid, which represents drafting of documents, defence and representation in proceedings before the court.

According to European Commission (2021), appropriate funding will be mobilized.³²

Thematic and geographical EU funding will be mobilised along the priorities of this strategy, giving specific attention to (i) the gender dimension, (ii) donor coordination, (iii) local ownership and (iv) support to civil society organisations and local actors and activists; (v) addressing the special protection needs of children in migration.

The following three characteristics are taken into account according to the Guidelines³³ on Victims of Trafficking, Pre-trial Investigation and Interinstitutional Cooperation, signed by the Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre on 17th December 2015 when identifying victims of human trafficking:

- Criminal acts (selling, buying, otherwise transferring or acquiring, recruiting, transporting or holding captive);
- Methods of subduing the will of the person (physical violence or threats or otherwise depriving the person of the possibility to resist, or taking advantage of the victim's dependence or vulnerability, or using deception, or accepting or paying money, or obtaining or giving other pecuniary advantage to a person who has effective control over the victim);
- The purposes of the exploitation (the perpetrator knew or intended that the victim would be exploited in slavery or slavery-like conditions, for prostitution, pornography or other forms of sexual exploitation, for forced labour or services, including begging, for the commission of a criminal offence, or for any other purpose of exploitation, or for the obtaining of an organ, tissue or cell of the victim).

For a person's actions to qualify as trafficking in human beings, it is necessary to establish at least one attribute from each group of attributes, e.g., it is necessary to establish that at least

³² European Commission. (2021). Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions on the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021- 2025.

³³ Įsakymas „Dėl prekybos žmonėmis aukų nustatymo, ikiteisminio tyrimo ir tarpinstitucinio bendradarbiavimo rekomendacijų patvirtinimo, 2015-12-17.

one criminal act has been committed against the victim of trafficking in human beings, the manner of the person's willingness to participate in the act, and the purpose of the exploitation.³⁴

When identifying a victim of trafficking in human beings, an employee of the responsible institution, body or organisation, including the Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support centre, shall fill in a card for the identification of a victim of trafficking in human beings, or a document or a form complying with the card as provided for in the departmental act of the institution, body or organisation. The card shall be completed by the official or employee who has the first interview with the victim of trafficking in human beings. The card shall be completed immediately after this interview. The completed card is not a procedural document, its purpose is to summarise the characteristics of a victim of trafficking in human beings in order to help the officer or employee to properly identify the victim of trafficking in human beings, and is therefore to be completed by the officer or employee who has contact with a person who may have been trafficked, whether or not he/she has the procedural authority to decide on the initiation of a pre-trial investigation.³⁵

In all cases, when identifying a person who may have been or may be a victim of trafficking in human beings, he/she (his/her representative) shall be informed about the possibility of obtaining assistance from the Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support centre or other NGOs providing assistance to the victims of trafficking. If possible, the person's decision to receive assistance may be expressed in the presence of a representative of the Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre or other NGOs, who would provide detailed information on the assistance provided, and the assistance shall only be started after the person has expressed his/her wish to receive it in writing. The victim's personal data (name, surname, date of birth, gender, nationality, address of the actual place of residence, if this data is identifiable) shall only be transferred to the Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre or other NGOs providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings if the victim, in accordance with the law, is willing to receive the assistance and agrees to the transfer of these personal data for the purpose of providing assistance.³⁶

The social worker and/or psychologist provides a consultation during which he/she assesses the person's problems and social situation, determines the need for social assistance, draws up a plan of primary assistance actions, which is agreed with the person, and, if necessary, organises the necessary assistance (e.g., temporary accommodation, shelter). In all cases, after identifying the signs of trafficking in human beings, it shall, taking into account the

³⁴ Order on the Identification of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, Pre-Trial Investigation and Approval of Recommendations for Interinstitutional Cooperation, 2015-12-17.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Įsakymas „Dėl prekybos žmonėmis aukų nustatymo, ikiteisminio tyrimo ir tarpinstitucinio bendradarbiavimo rekomendacijų patvirtinimo.

interests of the trafficked person, pass on the information received about the possible case of trafficking in human beings to the police and submit a completed card.

If a victim of trafficking in human beings - a third-country national in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania (irrespective of the place of exploitation) applies to the International Organisation for Migration, the specialists of this organisation inform the person about the possibility of staying in Lithuania if a period of decision-making will be granted. If the adult victim wishes to receive assistance in accordance with the law and agrees to hand over his/her personal data (name, surname, date of birth, sex, nationality, address of the actual place of residence, if this data can be established), he/she is sent to the assistance organisations cooperating with the pre-trial investigation. If the third-country national wishes to return to his/her country of origin, he/she shall be informed of the possibility of returning voluntarily with the assistance of the International Organisation for Migration. If the TCN wishes to return to the country of origin and funding is available, IOM specialists fill in the Voluntary Return Form, process his/her travel documents, purchase travel tickets, and organise temporary accommodation, transit and reception assistance. If the TCN is detained and accommodated in the Foreigners Registration Centre of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, his/her return is organised in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania.

Three of the four women interviewed needed legal assistance to protect their interests. One woman needed legal assistance for her studies: *"The Red Cross helped me get in touch with a lawyer. The university told the lawyer a lot of negative things about me, that I was not a good student, that I had missed my billing time. The lawyer said that this was not a sufficient reason for suspension. The university also had a lawyer. The lawyer made me feel safer"* (Interview 1). Another woman used legal aid to obtain a residence permit in Lithuania: *"No, but we had a court case with migration. When I was in my second year, they did not give me a migration permit; because I married another man, a Lithuanian citizen, when I arrived, and the migration said it was a sham marriage. I even had to go to the Supreme Court in Vilnius. There they said that the Klaipeda Migration Board was wrong"* (Interview 2). The third woman uses legal aid for divorce: *"No, we are not divorced yet, but the divorce process is already underway. I have applied to the Klaipeda court for divorce. They gave me a form to fill in and send to my husband and now we are waiting for his reply. But we have been separated since August 2020"* (Interview 4). Legal advice was also needed on residence: *"They help me to find a place to live, how to fill in the declaration, how to fill in the documents related to residence"* (Interview 1), on various legal issues, letters and on my rights: *"Yes, I have a lawyer who can help me when I need help. For example, to explain my rights, whether I can appeal against something or not. So when I have questions I can ask him"* (Interview 2), *"Then I talked to the lawyer <...>, he said that even through the police they cannot throw me out of the house if I have nowhere to go with the child"* (Interview 4). The access to lawyers for women from third countries has

provided more security and at the same time has contributed to a better integration in Lithuania.

Third-country nationals must obtain a visa to enter Lithuania unless they are coming from a country whose nationals do not need a visa to enter Lithuania or if they have obtained a residence permit in Lithuania prior to their arrival. Possession of a visa does not entitle third-country nationals to stay in the Republic of Lithuania for longer than the period specified in the visa. To stay in Lithuania for a longer period, they must obtain a residence permit. Two types of residence permits can be issued in Lithuania:

- a temporary residence permit (usually issued for up to 1 year);
- Long-term resident permit of the Republic of Lithuania to reside in the European Community (usually issued for 5 years).

Grounds for issuing a temporary residence permit A temporary residence permit may be issued to third-country nationals if:

- the person has retained the right to citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania;
- in the case of family reunification;
- the person intends to work;
- the person intends to engage in a legal activity;
- the person intends to study;
- the foreigner has been placed under guardianship (custody);
- he/she is or has been a victim of trafficking in human beings and cooperates with the pre-trial investigation body or the court;
- he/she is unable to leave due to a dangerous condition of the body and requires urgent emergency medical assistance.

The foreigner must submit the application for the first temporary residence permit and other documents to the diplomatic mission or consular office of the Republic of Lithuania abroad, and the foreigner who is legally residing in the Republic of Lithuania must submit the application to the migration service of the territorial police office in the territory of which he or she intends to settle.³⁷

All the third-country nationals interviewed have obtained a residence permit in Lithuania. Some have a temporary residence permit in Lithuania, while others have a permanent residence permit: *"I got a visa for one year. Every year I renewed my visa"* (Interview 1), *"We were given a temporary residence permit in Lithuania. Now we are permanent residents of Lithuania"* (Interview 2), *"I have a residence permit until January 2022. Then I can extend it for another 2 years and then pass the exam and get a permanent residence permit"* (4 interviews). One woman was granted a residence permit because of her studies: *"I came here to study"* (Interview 1) and applied for a permit at the Lithuanian Embassy in Georgia. Another woman was assisted by a company in Lithuania, which collected the necessary documents for

³⁷ International Organization for Migration 2009.

the permit: *"For the migration permit we went to a company that we found on the internet to help us make it legal that we were moving. The company helped with the paperwork, they handed over all the necessary documents for the migration"* (Interview 2). The third woman had to search the archives for information about her grandfather who had lived in Lithuania and contacted a person who had lived in Lithuania to help her with the paperwork: *"We did it quickly and within 7 months. We picked up all the data from the archives because my grandfather is no longer alive. We did everything based on the grandfather. Because he lived here. So, when we had collected all the documents, then we came to Vilnius. So, we had to lift all the archives because we had relatives here. We did everything ourselves. We found a person in Lithuania who collected all the documents for us while we were in Russia because we didn't have time to come here too often then"* (Interview 3). The fourth woman got her permit thanks to her father living in Lithuania: *"I got this permanent residence permit through my father because I am a member of the family"* (interview 4). None of the women interviewed had ever thought of living in Lithuania without a permit, because living without a permit is illegal and clearly prevents one from settling in Lithuania.

Third-country nationals permanently residing in Lithuania who have come to work in highly skilled jobs, as well as third-country nationals who have come for work purposes or who have come for purposes other than work but who have been allowed to work and have a residence permit, and who have been compulsorily insured or who have insured themselves with state social pension insurance, have the same right to receive a state social insurance pension in accordance with the State Social Insurance Pensions Act. Foreigners, including stateless persons who have a permanent or temporary residence permit in the Republic of Lithuania, as well as other persons in the cases provided for in the international treaties of the Republic of Lithuania, have the right to receive social services under the Law on Social Services. Foreigners holding a long-term residence permit of the Republic of Lithuania in the European Community are entitled to receive cash social assistance (social allowance, housing heating, drinking water and hot water cost compensation). The right to free emergency primary care in Lithuania is guaranteed to all foreigners, including third-country nationals, under the Law on the Health System of the Republic of Lithuania. According to the Law on Health Insurance, compulsory health insurance covers foreigners permanently residing in the Republic of Lithuania, foreigners with a temporary residence permit in the Republic of Lithuania who are employed in the Republic of Lithuania or who have been employed in the Republic of Lithuania for at least 6 months and are registered as unemployed with the territorial labour offices of the Republic of Lithuania, and their minor family members; unaccompanied minor foreigners. The Republic of Lithuania has also signed bilateral agreements on the coordination of the social security system with some third countries, thus guaranteeing at least part of the benefits.³⁸

³⁸ Lithuanian Social Research Centre et al., 2013.

During the interviews it was revealed that some social guarantees were granted to women from third countries in Lithuania:

- Benefits: *"I received a lump sum from the state"* (Interview 1);
- Child allowances: *"I get money for my children, well now for one. You don't have to be a citizen of LT, but being a resident is enough. A residence permit is enough to get the allowance. You have to prove that the children live in Lithuania. And I have a certificate from a training institution. The allowance lasts until the age of 18"* (Interview 2), *"I get this for my children"* (Interview 3);
- Support for the Covid- 19 situation: *"Well, as a UAB we used to get allowances. The accountants helped us to get the paperwork right and we got a small amount of benefits. It was enough to pay the taxes and also to cover small expenses"* (Interview 2), *"Now, because of Covid, my husband was given an allowance for being at home because of his children's illness with them (he didn't work), but only once"* (Interview 3).

However, one interviewee said she receives nothing from Lithuania. *"So, I tell them that I have been in the queue for about 1 year and it is not my problem, that life circumstances have changed. And I can't sit at home with my child and not work because I don't get any extra money. That if I don't work, we won't be able to live and without the nursery how will I go to work. [...] As for the child benefit, it is also €60, as if he has to get it, but he doesn't because he was told that the child's parent must be Lithuanian. So my husband could have applied for the benefit but he refused. [...] Then they told me that if I go to the stock exchange, I will get insurance. So, I stood on the exchange. At the exchange they told me that I had insurance, but at the clinic they said no. Then I even called the municipality and they said that I don't have 6 months of work experience in Lithuania, so I won't have insurance"* (Interview 1).

This shows that the existing laws in Lithuania do not always protect third-country nationals from even greater vulnerability and in some cases can lead to even greater poverty in the country.

People receiving healthcare services in Lithuania can be covered by compulsory health insurance, take out voluntary insurance with an insurance company of their choice, or pay for the services themselves: in state-run institutions, at the prices and payment procedures set by the Ministry of Health, and in commercial institutions, at the prices approved by the Ministry. Third-country nationals can receive free medical services only if they are covered by compulsory or voluntary insurance.

Persons with a temporary residence permit in Lithuania are not included in the categories of persons covered by state funds. If they lose their job, they lose their coverage. When they reach old-age pension age, they receive a pension from a foreign state, but do not become insured by the Lithuanian state. Third-country nationals who have a permanent residence

permit in Lithuania acquire the same status as permanent residents of Lithuania. And if they fall into these categories, they become state insured.³⁹

The interviews revealed that medical assistance can be provided to women arriving in Lithuania if needed. However, in order to receive free assistance, they had to:

- work under an employment contract and then automatically pay taxes for medical assistance: *"Because we work, we pay taxes to UAB. This means we can get free medical care. Me, my children and my mother can get it for free. And when we couldn't, we took out medical insurance. But the medical insurance only worked in crisis situations, when we needed urgent medical help"* (Interview 2), *"Well, when I work, I have medical insurance for me and my sons, but not like this. So, for now I can use the free medical services."* (Interview 4).
- Working as a self-employed person and paying my own taxes for medical care: *"Because before I was in the sickness fund, and now that I am self-employed, I have to pay for my own medical care [...]. My child under 18 is free, my husband is also free"* (Interview 3);

Even though medical care is free, women have to pay for services: *"[...] nowadays we have to pay for services ourselves, like dental treatment and so on."* (Interview 2). The women in the study also noticed some differences in the medical treatment in their country and in Lithuania: *"There are no immunomodulators here to support the immunity of the person, because here you either don't get sick or you take antibiotics. Because here you can buy immunomodulators to maintain your immunity and here there are none."* (Interview 3), *That is why I also like Lithuania, because here my father had a heart attack, a stroke and the surgery and other medical services were free. And all the treatment was free. I was shocked because in Armenia nothing is free"* (Interview 4). One of the interviewees thinks that *"[...] it would be good to have free medical insurance for everyone who comes here, as long as the person can't find a permanent job anymore"* (interview 4).

We would like to point out that one of the most important directions of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania's activities in the area of reform of the legal system in the field of law and order and domestic policy is to implement radical crime prevention and control measures, i.e., to comprehensively address the causes of these phenomena, to modernize and strengthen the systems of the law-enforcement agencies and other state institutions, to support the work of NGOs, and to disrupt the networks of criminal structures involved in trafficking in human beings and the organisation of prostitution, the organisation of the abuse of children, and the organisation of commercial exploitation. The Seimas and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania have taken legal and organisational measures to curb trafficking in human beings and to establish an appropriate control mechanism to prevent it.⁴⁰

³⁹ International Organisation for Migration, 2009.

⁴⁰ Bazylevas, I. Pajaujis, V. *Trafficking in human beings and a systemic approach as a solution to the problem*, 2015.

The absence of a clear policy approach to women in prostitution or trafficking, or a model to guide the revision of previous or new laws, creates the conditions for exploitation, abuse, violence, slavery and criminality to flourish. With Lithuania's accession to the 1979 Convention, the government of the country commits itself to abolishing all forms of slavery and prostitution of women by harmonising its laws. Meanwhile, in other European Union countries (such as Sweden), prostitution has long been officially recognised as an intolerable form of abuse against women and children. Moreover, in 2014, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania adopted a Resolution⁴¹ initiated by the Member of the Seimas, Vincė Vaidevutė Margevičienė, on criminal liability for the purchase of sexual services (16 December 2014, No. XII-1464). Subsequently, on 25-03-2015, on the initiative of the same Member of the Seimas, another Resolution "On the abolition of punishment for the provision of sexual services and the criminalisation of purchasers of sexual services" was drafted and submitted to the President of the Republic of Lithuania, the Speaker of the Seimas, the heads of the country's responsible institutions and committees, and the Bishops' Conference of Lithuania. However, no response from them has been received so far.

This leaves the possibility that women victims of trafficking in Lithuania may not only not receive psychosocial assistance but may also be deprived of social guarantees or medical assistance.

⁴¹ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. *Resolution on Criminal Liability for Procurement of Sexual Services*, 2014 December 16 No. XII-1464, Vilnius.

Chapter Three - Economic Empowerment

More than 20 000 third-country nationals, mostly from Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, come to Lithuania every year for work. In 2020, 26,610 residence permits were issued, 24,949 in 2019 and 12,476 in 2018. Although Lithuania aims to attract highly skilled talent and focuses its migration policy on attracting and integrating these individuals, talent accounts for only 1% of arrivals.⁴²

High emigration flows have led to labour shortages in some sectors. Labour immigrants are needed for economic growth. Labour attraction policies will determine whether immigrants with high skills and occupational shortages are willing to come to Lithuania. Third-country nationals usually work in jobs that citizens of the Republic of Lithuania do not want to do.⁴³

Employment help is provided by municipal agencies for victims of human trafficking.⁴⁴ Although employment support is ensured by the government via NGOs, it is difficult for both foreign nationals and even Lithuanian nationals who are victims/survivors of human trafficking. According to Blažytė⁴⁵ (2010), the following issues are often seen among victims of human trafficking in Lithuania. The first issue is a language. Although, majority of the victims of human trafficking in Lithuania are Lithuanian, some victims are from third countries. In order to integrate into the labour market in Lithuania, language of the country can be a must. The second issue is that when general economic is not well functioning, it is even harder for the foreign victims to integrate into the labour market. It is because getting a job itself is difficult for them as well as Lithuanian citizens. The third issue is that a lack of education and personal motivation is unable the third country nationals to get employed in Lithuania. There are also physical, psychological, and sexual burdens and traumas while they are in need of employment. All above-mentioned issues make it harder for victims of human trafficking to (re-)integrate into the labour market and successfully get a job in Lithuania.

The NGOs rendering assistance to victims of THB are financed by the State through the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania. Extra funding to NGOs were allotted by municipalities to implement prevention and assistance projects in their territory.⁴⁶

Each year, the state budget allocations for social assistance for victims of human trafficking, including forced labor, and those who may have been affected by human trafficking are increasing: from 115 thousand EUR in 2017 to the planned 245 thousand EUR in 2020. Such

⁴² Bielevičiūtė, I. & Trumpytė, R. *Integration of immigrants into the labor market - how is Lithuania doing?* 2021.

⁴³ Ščerbuk, J. *Management of Immigration Processes in Lithuania*, State and Prospects, 2015

⁴⁴ GRETA, 2018.

⁴⁵ Blažytė, G. (2011). *Victims of human trafficking (re-)integration into the labour market in the context of the European union member state*. 9(2). Socialines Darbas.

⁴⁶ GRETA, 2018.

assistance is provided through the funding of projects of non-governmental organizations acting in the field of the prevention of trafficking in human beings.

The funding is being increased in response to the growing number of people in need of such assistance in recent years. It is estimated that in 2017 over 200 persons received such assistance, and this year it will be provided to approximately 300 persons.⁴⁷

According to United Nations⁴⁸ (2020), promoting a safe migration framework needs to be done such as establish a gender-responsive and safe migration framework to protect migrant women and girls, including those with an irregular migration status, from violations of their human rights at every stage of migration by:

(a) Supporting increased access to pathways for safe and regular migration to avoid exploitation, including sexual exploitation, considering the specific needs of women and their children and ensuring the rights of the migrant populations within such pathways to protected formal employment opportunities and legal paths to education and vocational training, in both their countries of origin and destination.⁴⁹

Reviewing Bielevičiūtė & Trumpytė's (2021) data⁵⁰ on labour market integration in Lithuania, it was observed that:

- No attention is paid to the integration of immigrants. According to public sector representatives working in the field of immigrant integration, the sustainable integration of non-talent foreigners is not on Lithuania's agenda. The National Progress Plan 2021-2030 envisages making the country more attractive to highly skilled workers but does not focus on the integration of lower skilled foreigners.
- Fear of reporting abuses at work. State labour inspectorates receive an increasing number of reports of possible exploitation in the workplace each year, but experts interviewed believe that this figure does not reflect the true scale of the problem. Immigrants who come to Lithuania for work are often unaware of their rights, their ability to report safely or are afraid to do so.
- There is a lack of information about job vacancies in foreign languages. Immigrants or asylum seekers face challenges in finding or changing jobs when looking for this information in languages other than Lithuanian. 70% of businesses employing immigrants also rely on references to find new employees. Only 2% of businesses find employees through the Employment Service.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Social Security and Labour. (2020). *Lithuania has committed to the consistent fight against forced labour.*

⁴⁸ United Nations. (2020). *Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, p. 12.

⁴⁹ United Nations. (2020). *Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.*

⁵⁰ Bielevičiūtė, I., Trumpytė, R. *Imigrantų integracija į darbo rinką – kaip sekasi Lietuvai?*. 2021.

The women interviewed expressed the advantage of knowing Lithuanian the most. If a person from a third country speaks Lithuanian, his/her integration in Lithuania improves much more, whereas if the person does not speak Lithuanian, he/she has to accept that it will be difficult to find a job and the Lithuanians themselves will be dissatisfied with this. The women shared the difficulties they had to go through:

1. *"I moved out with my friends to a rented flat, and it was difficult for those friends to find a job. Everyone wanted them to speak Lithuanian. If you don't speak Lithuanian, you won't get a job"* (Interview 1).
2. difficulty speaking Lithuanian correctly: *"I started to learn Lithuanian. I didn't speak Lithuanian correctly, e.g., instead of "I", I used to say "as", I used to use my hands. Sometimes I can't speak Lithuanian fluently. Sometimes I used Google translate", "But I have started to understand Lithuanian. But it's hard to speak. I find it hard to pronounce the endings"* (Interview 1).
3. not communicating in a taxi: *"The driver was speaking Lithuanian and I didn't understand what he was saying"* (1 interview).
4. Feeling disliked for not knowing the language: *"If you speak Lithuanian, Lithuanians like you"* (1 interview).
5. free language courses only for those who have a residence permit in Lithuania: *"And they only work with people who have a residence permit in Lithuania. And when we got the residence permit, I went back to the courses again"* (Interview 2).
6. there is a lack of methodologies to facilitate the learning of the Lithuanian language: *"It would be good if the government would come up with some kind of methodology for learning the Lithuanian language"* (2 interviews).
7. not all services are available if you don't understand: *"Not all doctors understand. It is very difficult to communicate, someone helps to translate"* (2 interviews).
8. when one tries to speak Lithuanian, others want to help and start speaking Russian, which prevents one from improving in Lithuanian: *"It is not enough to learn the words here, but one has to go out and communicate. And I didn't communicate anywhere, and when I tried to communicate, the people around me would say, "You'd better speak Russian," so that's it. People wanted to help and would switch to Russian"* (Interview 2).
9. tension: *"I felt tension because everybody speaks Lithuanian there, you try to understand everything the teacher says, so you have to turn your brain on. I was always lucky that someone knew Russian and explained it to me", "They start to moralise to me that you live in Lithuania, and you don't know the language. I tell them that I just started living here and I am still learning"* (Interview 3).
10. feeling hatred from the Lithuanian side: *"One time I even started crying and I said why do you pour all your hatred on me. And it's always my fault, I can't learn the whole Lithuanian language in a year"* (Interview 4).

11. in order to translate documents or just to understand them, you have to use translation agencies: *"A translation agency helped. I go there when I need to, again there is a Russian-speaking person who helps"* (3 interviews).

- There is no data on the effectiveness of qualification programmes provided by the state. Asylum seekers and some other third-country nationals may participate in qualification programmes which should facilitate their job search. However, according to the Employment Service, data on the effectiveness and relevance of such programmes are not collected;
- Exploitation of third-country nationals in the workplace. Entrants to Lithuania are vulnerable to possible abuse by employers. According to the State Labour Inspectorate, the most common problem is that the workplace does not meet the promised conditions, the promised salary is not paid, and newcomers often do not know if they are working illegally.

The work experiences of the women interviewed in Lithuania are diverse. However, all of them are working. For some it is a permanent job, for others it is temporary. Finding a job in Lithuania is not easy just because of the language, as they want to speak Lithuanian with both the team and the clients. Interviewed women's work experience:

- One of the interviewed women said, that she had to look for a job first of all not in Lithuania, but in another country during the summer, when she did not have to go to studies, because there were simply no job opportunities in Lithuania: *"I had good friends who helped me find a job in Greece. I worked to provide for myself. There wasn't always money, so I had to work. I worked for three years"* (Interview 1). A few years later, she was very happy when she received an offer to work in Lithuania but faced other difficulties due to the language barrier: *"I got my first job in 2018 in a pizzeria. They spoke English there, they trained me. It was not a problem that it was my first job in LT, they trained me. There were people who didn't speak English well and I spoke Lithuanian. It was difficult to find people to answer questions. If there was a manager around, I felt good because he spoke English"* (Interview 1). It was because of the language barrier that she had to quit her job: *"I had to quit my job. There was a camera at work, I was making mistakes. I wanted someone to teach me when I made mistakes. Because many people didn't speak English, they didn't want to talk to me. I quit my job at the pizzeria"* (Interview 1), and it was not easy to find another job either: *"It was difficult to find another job. I started talking to Lithuanian friends. I told them that I was looking for a job, I didn't speak Lithuanian well. I talked to the students in the group. [...] I got a link where I could look for a job. I could look for a job on FB, CV market, etc. Some called, some didn't"* (Interview 1). Finding a job in Lithuania required a lot of effort, even if the job found was not fully satisfying: *"I saw in a restaurant that they were looking for an employee. I got a reply from the employer saying that he was interested and gave me a phone number. I called and the person*

spoke English. I was allowed to call the restaurant. I went to the restaurant, but they did not speak English. I called the manager so that he could translate. I only spoke and understood a little Lithuanian. He taught me how to use the dishwasher in the restaurant. I worked with Lithuanians there. I learned to speak Lithuanian on the job" (Interview 1). The woman was working legally but the hours were long and tiring: "Yes (there was a work contract) [...] the work was hard, I was working 12 hours a day, 4 times a week, it was summertime" (Interview 1). The most painful experience she had was the unequal pay between her and the Lithuanians: "When I worked in a pizzeria, they paid me an hourly wage. They paid me and others differently. I worked full time and was paid differently than others. The salary was 450 €/month. If you work extra hours, in the summer, on weekends, you earn 500 €. I earned €60 less than the others. The workplace doesn't count your last hours. If you work 12 hours, you work 11 hours. If you work 7 hours, you work 6 hours. I worked more than my salary. That was painful. I did a tax return and got a refund of €150. I called the tax office and explained the calculations and so on. The employer explained that if you work more, you get less tax refund, if you work less you get more tax refund. Now I should be working full hours, but the salary does not show that I am working full hours" (Interview 1). The woman felt discriminated against because of this.

- The second interviewee was trying to create a job for herself: "I set up a company. And it was a great start. We painted paintings and had an exhibition in Klaipeda and Vilnius. More in Vilnius. There was an exhibition at the Arka Gallery. In a word, we set up a UAB. Then we started printing paintings on fabric and knitting sweaters. I painted it myself" (Interview 2). However, difficulties came when the quarantine started: "Because of Covid our exhibitions stopped. And I couldn't do exhibitions via the internet. I didn't have the skills to sell online and now I work as a maths tutor. As for exhibitions, I became a member of the National Union of Lithuania, and we are allowed to sell our works when the cruise ships come to Klaipeda port and there was a big demand for them" (Interview 2). The quarantine altered the work plans and I had to adapt to the current situation.
- The third woman also has difficulties, but not only because of the language, but also because she cannot work according to her speciality: "I would like to work according to my education (pharmacy). Well, now I would maybe go somewhere that requires interaction with people, any kind of activity, but not physical work. [...] For example, I could work in a pharmacy in Akropolis, where you have to arrange the goods on the shelves and so on. I would be in my field, but I need Lithuanian language [...]" (Interview 3). The woman says that the job is also emotionally important: "I work to avoid burnout and to have my own money. It's very hard to sit at home. Now I help the girls to rent out their places and I do the cleaning of the flat" (Interview 3). She also has to keep improving herself and has several degrees: "I booked my self-employment for yoga because I wanted to work on my own or with someone else. I also did a

manicure and pedicure course. And I had managed to work in this field when we arrived" (Interview 3).

- A fourth woman is having difficulty finding a permanent job: *"Yes, because now I'm working here on a temporary basis because the woman who worked before me went into hospital and had to be replaced. I am usually called in when one of the staff takes sick leave. So, it's a temporary job" (Interview 4).* The woman is also unable to work professionally but tries to telecommute whenever possible: *"I am an engineer by profession. And I have 15 years of experience in this field in Armenia. <...> Well, they send me projects from Armenia, and I do them and I get paid for it. Well, I work remotely from time to time, that's the way it is, because there is no other way" (Interview 4).* For this woman, the biggest difficulty is to combine work and painting: *"Because for the time being I am working in a non-permanent job, I cannot find another job for the time being, until the kindergarten issue is solved, because I need to make the schedule and the kindergarten time coincide as well" (Interview 4).*

From the women who shared their experiences, it can be concluded that it is not easy to integrate third-country nationals who have been trafficked into the Lithuanian labour market, because of the language barrier, the inability to adapt one's own specialty, and the inability to combine complementary subjects. Also, in the absence of a wide range of choices, women decide to work in any kind of job, thus failing to realise themselves.

The government and NGOs participated in awareness-raising campaigns organized by the interior ministry in cooperation with regional municipalities, including informing victims and vulnerable groups of their rights and providing information on how to receive financial, health, and social care assistance.⁵¹

According to European Commission (2021), traffickers increasingly started using online to "recruit" potential targets during the Covid-19 crisis. It is evidenced that technology broadened traffickers' ability to recruit and exploit victims because it could more discreetly reach victims and potential clients, control victims, communicate among perpetrators, and conceal the process of trafficking. To combat such online-based trafficking procedure and criminal involvement, making the best use of technology and relying on digital evidence can alleviate the situations of victims in criminal proceedings. Cooperation with the private sector is therefore encouraged to harness innovation and expertise for the development of technology-based solutions to support prevention and combatting of trafficking in human beings. Prevention and awareness-raising activities on the safe use of the internet and social media, among others, could further contribute to mitigating the risk of child trafficking.⁵²

⁵¹ U.S. Department of State. (2020). *2020 trafficking in persons report: Lithuania*.

⁵² European Commission. (2021). *Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions on the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021- 2025*.

As European Parliamentary Research Services suggests⁵³, Lithuanian non-governmental organizations (e.g., Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre) tries to detect and block illicit websites that could recruit potential victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation and connect them with sex pimps/traffickers and/or buyers.

Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre provides assistance in integrating victims of human trafficking into the labour market: paperwork, cooperation, mediation, assistance in preparing for job interviews, job search. However, this process is long and difficult because, women victims are very vulnerable, both emotionally and socially, and, secondly, women from third countries do not speak Lithuanian. One of the ways in which trafficked women from third countries can become more economically empowered is to take advantage of scrubbing opportunities.

Regardless of nationality, victims of human trafficking and potential victims can receive social and educational assistant depending upon needs of each of the individuals, as in the rules approved by Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania for assistance projects by NGOs to be funded from the State budget.⁵⁴

Additionally, European Commission encourages that member States to put in place community-led and peer-mentoring programmes involving victims of trafficking, offering opportunities for education, employment, and empowerment.⁵⁵ Lithuania is one of the member States, therefore the suggestions/implementations take place by NGOs in Lithuania.

According to the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, every third-country national who has the right to reside permanently or temporarily in the Republic of Lithuania has the right to education, training and qualifications. The State guarantees primary, basic and secondary education and access to higher education studies or vocational training programmes providing first qualifications.⁵⁶

Emerging issues and challenges:

- The guarantees given by the State to third-country nationals with regard to education and qualifications do not automatically guarantee their implementation. Education is one of the most important areas of integration policy for third-country nationals, but also one of the most problematic: The education system in Lithuania was created for a homogeneous society, therefore schools are not prepared to accept children of TCNs, they do not have basic infrastructure that meets their needs, schools lack a system that allows to professionally assess the quality of the knowledge a child has

⁵³ European Parliament Research Service. (2020). Implementation of Directive 2011/36 EU: Migration and Gender Issues. European Implementation Assessment.

⁵⁴ GRETA, 2018, p. 11.

⁵⁵ European Commission. (2021). *Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions on the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021- 2025.*

⁵⁶ Lithuanian Social Research Centre et al., 2013.

acquired abroad, and to deal effectively with the language barriers, The knowledge of intercultural competence of professionals working in educational institutions is limited and not adapted to address the challenges of integration of children of TCNs in the education system in particular and in the majority society in general; teachers lack knowledge and experience in working with children of TCNs. General measures to support vulnerable pupils do not always take into account the specific needs of newly arrived children, and without targeted integration policies at different levels of education, TCN children risk falling behind their peers. Third-country children face acculturation problems which have a negative impact on academic performance;

- The vast majority of third-country national students arrive on national multiple-entry visas in the first year of their studies, and temporary residence permits are usually issued in the second year of studies. Although the process of obtaining a national multiple-entry visa is simpler and quicker, a temporary residence permit gives the student more rights; for example, he/she is considered as a resident of Lithuania and the first year of studies is counted towards the period of residence in Lithuania (this is important in case he/she wants to apply for a permanent residence permit later), and he/she is guaranteed a broader range of social protection;
- For students, a temporary residence permit is issued for the duration of their studies, up to a maximum of one year, and can be renewed. However, the same procedure and fees apply each time, and there is no consideration of whether the student is applying for the first time or not. The student's progress or other academic achievements are not taken into account. This legal framework is perceived by universities and students alike as causing both administrative difficulties for universities and financial difficulties for students, as it requires not only the payment of a fee but also the translation of documents into Lithuanian.
- The intellectual potential of third-country national students who have completed their higher education in Lithuania is not used, as third-country nationals studying in higher education institutions are only allowed to work part-time (20 hours per week) in their second year of study. Moreover, they have to obtain a work permit unless they intend to work in a research and/or experimental (social, cultural) development work in a scientific and higher education institution during their studies. This limits students' opportunities to gain work experience, form professional contacts and reduces their motivation to remain working in Lithuania after graduation, thus depriving the State of highly qualified specialists of third-country nationals educated in Lithuania;
- Adult TCNs face cultural and structural barriers to accessing the opportunities offered by the education system, as Lithuania does not have a tradition of lifelong learning, with less than 15% of the Lithuanian population participating in lifelong learning, and the adult education infrastructure does not take into account the specific situation and needs of TCNs.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Lithuanian Social Research Centre et al., 2013.

Educational help can be also provided to victims of THB and their children. NGOs, such as Klaipeda social and psychological Support centre, Missing Person's Families Support Centre, Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Exploitation provide social assistance for victims of THB and presumed victims of THB, as well as were involved in preventive activities: seminars, preventive lectures, educational trainings for youngsters, students in high schools, persons at risk, children in care, specialists, spread information in public places and media about THB threats, ways to avoid of THB, possibilities to get assistance.⁵⁸

According to IOM Lithuania, they carry out vocational training as a means for third country nationals to integrate into the Lithuanian society with potential employment.⁵⁹ IOM also implements the following supports:

With a view toward empowering migrants and enhancing their prospects for effective integration, IOM:

- **disseminates information** in home and host countries on the rights and obligations of migrants,
- **offers pre-departure/cultural orientation courses** to facilitate their adjustment to life in a new country,
- **provides advice and counselling** related to services available to migrants in the host country,
- **carries out vocational training** to enhance their skills,
- **organizes conferences** to exchange information on integration policies,
- **improves the migrant's image** through the media,
- **organizes awareness raising and legal training** for lawyers on discrimination practices,
- **provides integration projects** for returning ethnic groups and improves health conditions of migrants.

The interviewed women had different experiences of education. One was studying on her own, others have children in school, and one has a child in kindergarten. The women identified the following difficulties related to education:

- *"In school, children have a Pupa textbook (Lithuanian language) and it is adapted for people who speak Lithuanian. [...] Because there are some stories in it and some words that even the translator cannot translate" (Interview 2).*
- *Teachers use outdated textbooks: "Because why do my eldest children speak Lithuanian, because they came to a Russian school, there were old teachers who pulled out old scanned Lithuanian textbooks that are no longer in the schools, and they're adapted like Oxford textbooks for foreigners" (Interview 2).*

⁵⁸ GRETA, 2018, p. 28.

⁵⁹ IOM Lithuania. Migrant integration.

- Teachers find it difficult to accept new methods: *"Well, I don't know, my son's teacher is from the Soviet era, it's a psychological approach to children from the old days"* (interview 3).
- During the quarantine period children have to study remotely, but with parents working and the child active, they had to let the child go to school anyway: *"[...] my son is finishing primary school, so he went to school through Covid as well, because he couldn't do distance learning at home alone. And my husband and I worked together. So he went to school because he can't sit quietly alone in front of the computer, he is active"* (Interview 3).
- For children who don't speak Lithuanian, it is difficult to go to a Lithuanian school: *"Besides, we live in Lithuania so we have to go to a Lithuanian school. [...] Of course it was difficult for him and it is difficult now"* (Interview 3).
- It is difficult to get a Lithuanian kindergarten for a child, offering Russian: *"Now they say, there are Russian kindergartens, why don't you want to go to Russian kindergartens? You say that you need to integrate, you need to know the Lithuanian language and you offer Russian kindergartens. Then why do I need a Russian kindergarten? As long as my child is still small, let him go to Lithuanian, it will be easier for him right away, because he is 3 years old"*.
- In kindergarten she faces negative attitudes towards herself: *"Well, with other parents the relationship is cruel and the attitude. And they treat the child very well. And with the parents, probably because of the language barrier"* (Interview 4).
- Strict rules at the university and partly a reluctance to listen to the student: *"I missed the report time. I didn't have enough money to pay. [...] I didn't manage to deliver all the papers/work on time because of my studies. I went to the university, to the supervisor and explained the situation, but he wouldn't listen. He couldn't take the exam/test because it was the next day, I missed the settlement time before that"* (Interview 1).

Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support Centre, after conducted interviews with third country women victims of violence, analysis also noticed other economic empowerment difficulties related to financial security, accommodation and transport.

Women did not feel financially secure when they arrived in Lithuania. This was influenced by both working conditions and quarantine. Two out of four women stated that they had to accept financial help from others: *"My parents supported me financially while I was not working"* (Interview 1), *"My friend helps me a little bit with money (gives me a loan)"*, *"My brother sends me money"* (Interview 4). One woman had to sell everything in her home country in order to settle in Lithuania: *"We came in 2014 when we raised money by selling off our real estate in order to have money"* (2 interviews). And only one out of four women said that their financial situation was satisfactory: *"Well, it's about good"* (Interview 3). However,

it can be concluded that women who come from third countries face financial difficulties, which again hinders successful integration in Lithuania.

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania finances projects for the support and reintegration of victims of human trafficking through the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.⁶⁰ Special projects from specialized NGOs receive funding that can offer necessary assistance for victims of human trafficking such as psychological, medical, housing, legal counselling, and so on. Temporary housing and legal assistance are provided by municipality specialized assistance agencies that are empowered by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania.

According to European Commission (2021), appropriate funding will be mobilized.⁶¹

- has a Consular Department responsible for protection of victims' interests, which consists of a central department and consular institutions abroad,
- is the official mechanism for cooperation on prevention of human trafficking,
- provides return, shelter, assistance, referral for victims of human trafficking.
- Caritas Lithuania, Klaipeda social and psychological support center also provides aid to women who were trafficked inside or outside Lithuania and to women who agreed to be involved into prostitution in any country but are victimized. Some of their services and roles are to offer different services in the field of victim support: safe shelter, material help, consultations with social workers, psychotherapists and/or lawyers. Error! Bookmark not defined.
- Missing Person's Families Support Centre aids to support families of missing persons, and women who were trafficked in and outside Lithuania. They work closely to a missing person's families or relatives, aim to decrease the numbers of missing persons that include trafficked victims. They provide victims with safe shelter, material help, consultations with social workers, psychotherapists and/or layers.

Due to financial hardship and instability, the women interviewed said that they mainly rented and only one bought an apartment. However, she was able to buy an apartment after selling off her property in Russia: *"We rented an apartment at first and then we sold our apartment in Moscow and bought an apartment here"* (Interview 2). In Lithuania, there is not so much financial possibility to earn money for housing. One of the difficulties in finding suitable housing is the unequal conditions for foreigners: *"Trying to rent to foreigners can raise prices"* (Interview 1).

⁶⁰European Commission. *Lithuania – 3. Implementation of anti-trafficking policy.*

⁶¹ European Commission. (2021). *Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions on the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021- 2025.*

When it comes to transportation services, IOM takes a large part of the services.

According to IOM Lithuania, they implement following activities⁶²:

- - **Assisted voluntary return and reintegration.** IOM Vilnius office provides return assistance to home countries for migrants in difficult situations since the establishment of the Office.
- - **Migration research.** IOM Vilnius implements topical research and collects, analyses and provides in the user-friendly manner main migration statistics.
- - **Prevention of trafficking in human beings.** IOM Vilnius office seeks to bring public's attention to the problem of human trafficking and provides return and reintegration assistance to victims of trafficking.
- - **Integration and promotion of tolerance.** IOM Vilnius works in promoting tolerance by providing trainings to civil servants aimed at increasing their understanding of different cultures.
- - **Representation of Lithuania in the European migration network.** IOM Vilnius office represents Lithuania in the European migration network and various working groups.

Two of the women used their own vehicles and knew how to drive when they came from abroad, which they saw as one of the advantages of being able to get to the places they were visiting more quickly and conveniently: „I have a driving licence. They changed them when I came here" (Interview 3), "I have an international driving licence. And I can still drive with it until 2022. But in the future I plan to have a Lithuanian driving licence" (Interview 4). The other two women did not have a licence, but one of them is considering getting one: "I don't drive, but my mother does. I need to take a driving course" (2 interviews). Driving licences give independence from other people and make them more attractive in the workplace.

As of April 2019, the European Union recognizes that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the official mechanism for cooperation on prevention of human trafficking. It provides return, shelter, assistance, referral for victims of human trafficking.⁶³

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Improved providing of the psychosocial services and the developed model of providing support to the victims of trafficking in the municipalities; - The empowerment of the vulnerable groups: Caritas Lithuania and law enforcement institutions prepare joint initiatives on human rights sensitization with special focus on treatment of victims of trafficking Role of partners implemented: - to participate in the creation of the above mentioned model; - to provide the trainings to the expert teams; - to supervise and to evaluate the functioning model; Tasks and

⁶² International Organization of Migrant. *IOM in Lithuania*.

⁶³ European Union. (2019). *European Justice. Lithuania. 4 – Help and support for victims of crime*.

activities completed: 1. 6 interdisciplinary teams (from local police officers, prosecutors, social workers, child protection agency, municipality, NGOs representatives) created for the purpose of investigation of trafficking in human being crimes and the monitoring of support to the victims (step I); 2. trainings on anti-trafficking provided to those interdisciplinary teams following the practice of Norwegian partners (step II); 3. model of systematic support and cooperation in anti-trafficking fields in Lithuania created (step III); 4. model of systematic support and cooperation applied in practice in the municipalities of Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda, Šiauliai, Panevėžys and Marijampole (step IV). This Project revealed the importance of interinstitutional cooperation and partnership that is vital if there is an ambition to provide the services of high rank and to develop the teams. The cooperation is important not only to secure the quality of the services but it's also a possibility to earn the human resources and to develop them.⁶⁴

Although there are individual representatives of various state structures trying to change the situation or finding solutions to facilitate the economic empowerment of third-country nationals who are victims of human trafficking, this is not enough. The still present attitude of employers towards the victim, which is still indifferent, intolerant and unsympathetic, prevents the effective integration into the labour market.

⁶⁴ EEA and Norway Grants. *Lithuanian society against trafficking in persons: the model of systematic approach.*

Conclusions and recommendations

1. There is a lack of more innovative tools and methodologies for working with third-country nationals who are victims of human trafficking.
2. Although the coordination of networking activities in Lithuania has already started, there is still a lack of standardisation of services and procedures for third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings.
3. Due to the closed and conservative nature of the Lithuanian society, it is necessary to consolidate at the state level migration as a phenomenon of opportunity rather than a threat, to implement measures to promote tolerance and multiculturalism in the Lithuanian society.
4. Raise awareness among members of society to achieve zero tolerance of human trafficking and modern slavery, to reduce stereotypes and discrimination against third-country nationals.
5. Insufficient sustainability of social assistance and preventive measures, manifested by recidivism of trafficking or exploitation and secondary victimisation. Therefore, the comprehensive model of psychosocial services and legal assistance for victims of trafficking in human beings, exploitation for prostitution and for persons who have been and may become victims of trafficking in human beings, needs to be improved by focusing on the individual needs of the victim, sustainable, coordinated and efficient activities, effectively complemented by innovation, proactive prevention and public information and education.
6. The victim's personal data (name, surname, date of birth, gender, nationality, address of actual residence, if this data is identifiable) shall be transmitted to NGOs providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings only if the victim wishes to receive assistance in accordance with the law and agrees to the transmission of this personal data for the purpose of providing assistance. Thus, not all cases of victims are transmitted to NGOs and not all receive assistance.
7. Provide access to longer and, if necessary, repeated Lithuanian language courses so that third-country nationals can learn the language and integrate not only into the labour market, but also to minimise social exclusion.
8. Encourage not to be afraid to report abuses at work. Every year, national labour inspectorates receive an increasing number of reports of possible exploitation in the workplace, but experts interviewed believe that this figure does not reflect the true scale of the problem.
9. There is a lack of information on job vacancies in foreign languages. Immigrants or asylum seekers face challenges in finding or changing jobs if they need information in a language other than Lithuanian.
10. Exploitation of third-country nationals in the workplace. Entrants to Lithuania are vulnerable to potential abuse by employers. According to the State Labour Inspectorate, the most common problem is that the workplace does not meet the promised conditions, the promised salary is not paid, and newcomers often do not know if they are working illegally.

11. The education system in Lithuania was created for a homogeneous society, therefore schools are not prepared to accept children of third-country nationals, they do not have a basic infrastructure that meets their needs, and there is a lack of a system in schools that would allow for a professional assessment of the quality of the child's knowledge acquired abroad, as well as for an effective solution to language barriers, The knowledge of intercultural competence of professionals working in educational institutions is limited and not adapted to address the challenges of integration of children of TCNs in the education system in particular and in the majority society in general; teachers lack knowledge and experience in working with children of TCNs. General measures to support vulnerable pupils do not always take into account the specific needs of newly arrived children, and without targeted integration policies at different levels of education, TCN children risk falling behind their peers. Children of third-country nationals face acculturation problems which have a negative impact on academic performance.

12. Third-country nationals can only receive free medical services if they are covered by compulsory or voluntary insurance, but due to integration difficulties, third-country nationals are not always able to pay for their own medical services or their work is not always legal.

13. One of the most important directions of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania's activities in the area of reform of the legal system in the field of law and order and domestic policy is to implement radical measures to prevent and control crime, i.e. to comprehensively address the causes of these phenomena, to modernise and strengthen the systems of law enforcement and other state institutions, to support the activities of NGOs, and to dismantle the networks of criminal structures involved in trafficking in human beings and the organisation of prostitution, the organisation of the abuse of children, and the organisation of commercial exploitation. Nevertheless, not all proposals and developments in the area of trafficking/prostitution are accepted by the Government.

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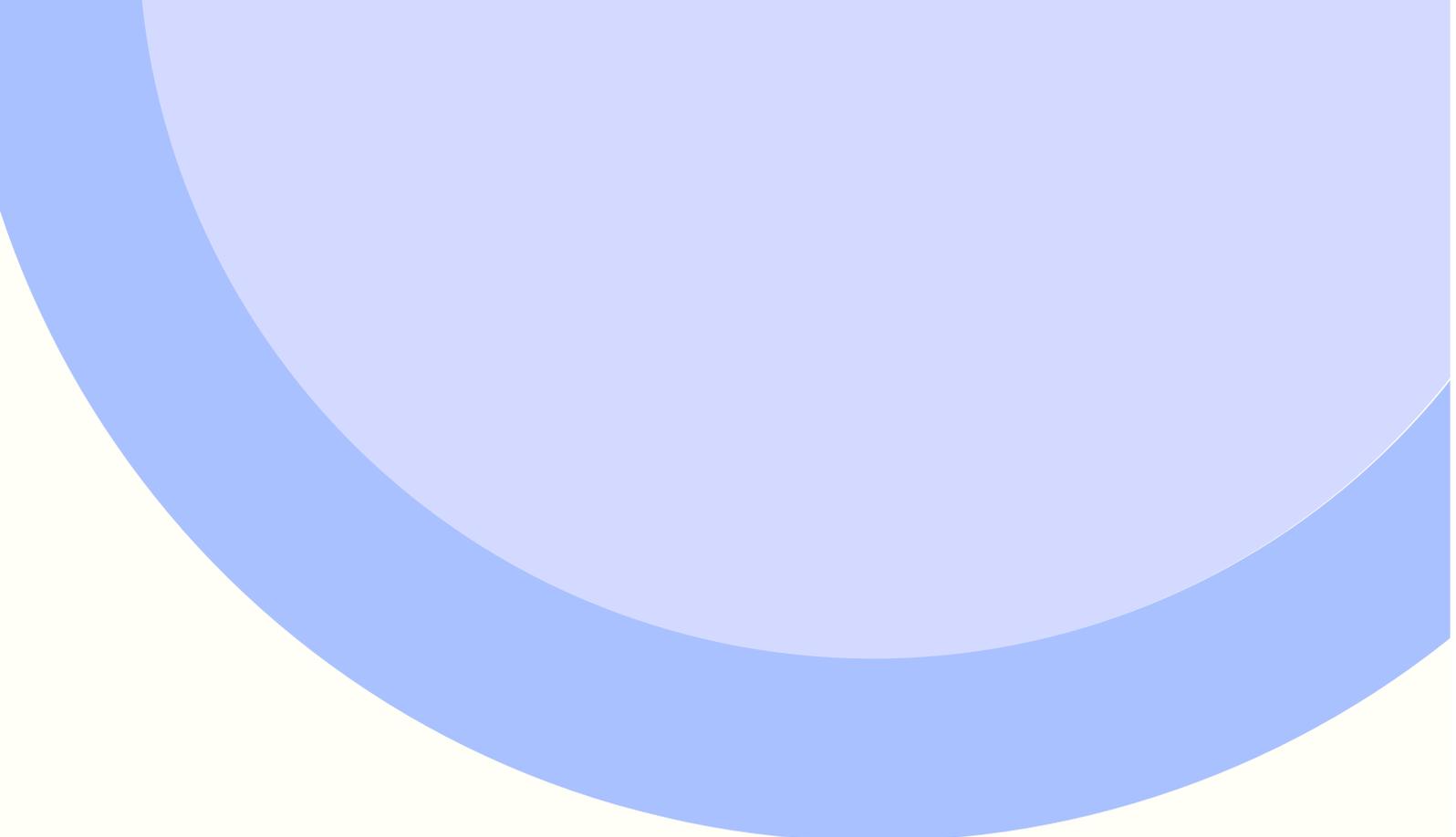
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