



PRAGUE PROCESS
ПРАЖСКИЙ ПРОЦЕСС

Enhancing anti-trafficking prevention through targeted, participatory, and multilevel actions

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**PRACTICAL
GUIDELINES**

About the authors

Madis Vainomaa, LL.M., is a lawyer and psychotherapist, with 20+ years of experience in human rights protection issues with the main focus on combating trafficking in human beings and addressing vulnerabilities in irregular and mixed migration, improving the institutional capacities and response mechanisms to address human trafficking, protection of the rights of refugees and IDPs, monitoring and investigating human rights issues.

Ivanka Hainzl works as an Anti-Trafficking Specialist at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). For 11 years, she was part of the organisation's Anti-Trafficking Programme. Currently, her professional focus is capacity-building projects targeting the national anti-trafficking stakeholders, as well as the development and implementation of various national anti-trafficking policy frameworks. She drafted reports and provided input on the development and assessment of the implementation of various national referral mechanisms, standard operating procedures for referral of victims, and transnational anti-trafficking cooperation frameworks in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and West Africa. In the last 5 years, her professional focus has been the regional anti-trafficking cooperation between the ECOWAS member states.

Prior to ICMPD, Ivanka Hainzl was serving as Senior expert to the Secretariat of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, within the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. For 6 years, she was implementing anti-trafficking projects at CARE International Bulgaria and the NGO Animus Association Foundation/LaStrada Bulgaria. Ms. Hainzl holds MA in Clinical and counselling psychology and has extensive training and experience in providing psychological and social support to victims of violence, incl. THB victims.

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Prague Process Secretariat
International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)
Rothschildplatz 4
A-1020 Vienna
Austria

www.pragueprocess.eu

www.icmpd.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trafficking in human beings (THB) remains a dynamic and evolving crime closely linked to the phenomena of socio-economic vulnerability, migration, climate change, conflicts and technological developments. Despite the implementation of international and national anti-trafficking legal frameworks, new patterns of exploitation continue to emerge. Vulnerable populations face heightened exposure due to limited access to employment, social protection, information, legal pathways for safe migration, etc.

Prevention is one of the core pillars of anti-trafficking responses under the UN Convention against Organised Crime, but it rarely goes beyond short-term awareness-raising campaigns. Effective prevention requires a holistic, multidisciplinary, and victim-centred approach that addresses both immediate risks and structural root causes. Prevention-focused actions should target different stages of THB – before actual exploitation occurs, disrupting THB while it is happening, and ensuring victims are not re-trafficked through long-term protection and re-integration support. This Policy Brief provides examples of actions under these three segments and offers recommendations on how to achieve effective prevention.

Successful prevention depends on multi-level actions that combine empowerment, protection, and deterrence strategies, ensuring that prevention is integrated across development, migration, labour, and social policies rather than limited to isolated awareness-raising campaigns. The Policy Brief also provides two practical tools and a list of further readings that entail detailed information on different aspects of prevention of THB.

EVOLVING DYNAMICS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Twenty-five years after the adoption of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, trafficking in human beings (THB) remains a dynamic and evolving crime. Trafficking methods, routes, and forms of exploitation continue to change, requiring anti-trafficking stakeholders to adapt their approaches accordingly.

Across the Prague Process participating states, THB and exploitation are increasingly **linked to migration**, both regular and irregular. Smuggling networks frequently shift towards exploitative practices and THB, particularly targeting vulnerable irregular migrants during transit. Border and migration authorities continue to encounter cases where migrants are exposed to exploitation coerced by traffickers using their irregular status, dependency on intermediaries, lack of funds, lack of knowledge about their rights, etc. Strengthening the capacity of authorities to discover indicators of THB within mixed migration flows therefore, remains essential, albeit also complex and demanding.

Regular labour migration channels are also increasingly being misused as avenues for human trafficking and exploitation. Countries in South-Eastern Europe report cases in which legally recruited foreign workers are subjected to exploitative practices after arrival¹. Migrants who initially reside and work legally may later move onward irregularly to other countries in search of better opportunities, increasing their exposure to exploitation and trafficking.

The state parties have an obligation to undertake measures to prevent and combat all forms of THB.

The successful prevention requires holistic approach and multi-levelled actions.

The increasing **use of digital technologies** has further transformed trafficking practices. Social media platforms, messaging applications, and online job portals are frequently used to recruit victims, advertise services, communicate with victims, and facilitate payments. Fraudulent job offers and misleading migration opportunities circulated online often target individuals seeking employment abroad. These digital tools enable traffickers to operate across borders with greater speed and anonymity, making the identification of victims and the prosecution of the perpetrators more complex. Furthermore, the sexual exploitation using online platforms marks a trend that requires adjustment in the prosecution procedures. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reports that sexual abuse and exploitation via **live web cams and platforms** is the second mostly identified type of sexual exploitation in the member states, after the sexual exploitation in the tourism sector². Europol's investigation at EU-level of online platforms for labour and sexual exploitation in 2023 revealed that traffickers are using the most popular social media platforms, dating apps and review forums to exploit vulnerable migrants, especially from Ukraine and China.³

The Prague Process region faces challenges related to **integration of refugees and persons under temporary protection** fleeing armed conflicts. Limited access to employment and social protection may push displaced people into informal or precarious work. Language barriers, lack of awareness of rights, dependency on intermediaries, insufficient centralised information from the governments and outreach activities further heighten the risk of abuse and increase vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking.⁴

Prevention of THB is one of the pillars of the anti-trafficking response rooted in the UN Trafficking Protocol,⁵ which obliges the State Parties to take measures to prevent and combat THB (Art. 9.1). Effective prevention should be coordinated and multidisciplinary and address root causes of THB. It shall also be grounded in human rights, gender-transformative, victim-centred and participatory approaches, and combine short-term and long-term measures.⁶

In practice, THB prevention is often understood primarily as awareness-raising among certain at-risk groups or the general public. While awareness is important, effective prevention goes beyond information campaigns. It requires strong institutional framework and well-prepared authorities capable of addressing THB both in practice and at the policy and legislative levels. In other words, successful prevention of THB calls for a holistic and sustained approach that targets all elements of the THB crime, rather than relying on short-term measures such as social media campaigns, or the distribution of printed materials.

HOW DOES AN EFFECTIVE PREVENTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING LOOK LIKE?

Effective prevention begins with a proper **understanding of the problem**. This means knowing where it occurs (region, location), who is at risk (affected vulnerable groups), and what prevention efforts are trying to achieve. With this knowledge, stakeholders can design targeted, focused and evidence-based interventions.

Prevention actions can target different vulnerable groups, such as youth, unemployed individuals (including seasonal and migrant workers), people fleeing conflict or disasters, or those seeking better life opportunities. In countries of

origin, prevention can support sustainable development, with a particular focus on women, children, minorities. This includes raising awareness of trafficking risks and improving understanding of safe migration options. In countries of transit and destination, prevention should address the demand side of THB, targeting users of different services where exploitation of workers could be involved. For instance, actions could raise awareness on the topic, discouraging the use of unethically sourced services and goods, tackling informal sectors like street vending, massage salons, casual labour, home-based work, or sectors like hospitality, construction and agriculture where labour-related abuse is more likely to occur.

Effective prevention also requires addressing the factors that enable trafficking in human beings. Preventing trafficking and exploitation stems from providing solutions to limited access to education and employment, weak economic development, challenged health and social protection systems, lack of accessible legal and safe migration opportunities, political instability, conflicts and war, climate-induced displacement, inefficient rule of law, and demand for cheap labour and commercial sexual services.

Prevention measures in countries of origin, transit and destination **should strengthen the legal and institutional anti-trafficking frameworks**, incl. law enforcement and judiciary actors. Ensuring that perpetrators are investigated and prosecuted effectively can act as a strong deterrent for potential traffickers.

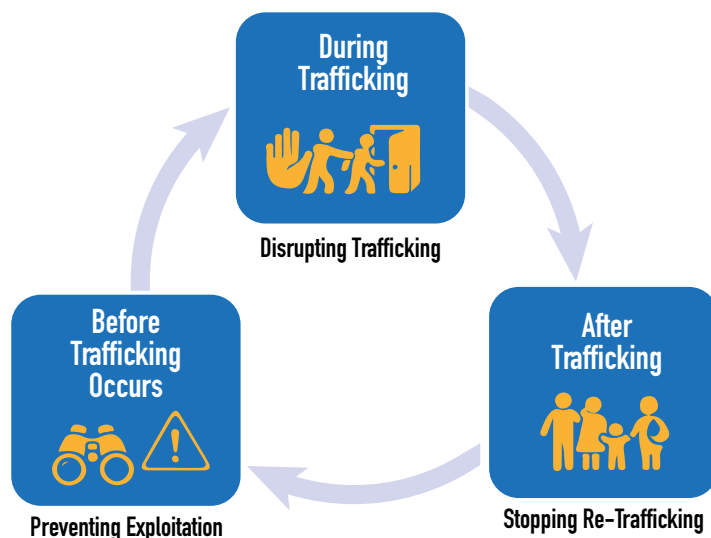
Another element of anti-trafficking prevention is **reducing the risk of re-trafficking**. This requires the authorities to make available proper support for victims during their recovery and (re) integration. Moreover, **THB victims should be recognised as an anti-trafficking stakeholder** and included in the planning, development and implementation of the anti-trafficking actions.

In short, preventive measures should include both:

- ▶ **empowerment strategies** that offer livelihood options and reinforce legislation and rule of law, and
- ▶ **enforcement-focused strategies** aimed at suppressing THB on both the demand and supply sides.⁷

Therefore, it is important that prevention actions intersect all areas of the anti-trafficking response and tackle trafficking at different stages: before it occurs, while it is taking place and after victims have been removed from exploitation. One action can crosscut two or all three stages. Therefore, the suggested model is not rigid, but rather dynamic, and the list of presented categories and examples should be seen as guidance.

PREVENTION ACTIONS MUST INTERSECT ALL AREAS OF THE ANTI-TRAFFICKING RESPONSE



I. Actions before human trafficking occurs

This group includes the widest range of preventive actions and focuses on reducing vulnerability so that people do not become victims of THB. This may include any of the following:

► **Raising awareness on THB** through 1) Information campaigns on different forms of THB, targeting relevant vulnerable groups (e.g. children and young people, minorities, communities with high unemployment people under temporary protection, refugees), the general public, or specific professional groups such as travel agents or health care professionals. To be successful, such campaigns should always offer actions tailored to each target group; 2) Work with the media on ethical reporting on THB, support investigative journalism on THB cases, and similar.

AWARENESS RAISING
EDUCATION AND TRAINING
STRONG POLICY FRAMEWORK
BETTER ACCESS TO SERVICES, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT
DISCOURAGING DEMAND
SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNITIES
ADDRESSING PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

► Implementing **educational programmes and training** on different aspects of THB for school children and students

► **Strengthening government policies and standards to ensure that** THB prevention is developed, embedded in the national anti-trafficking response, and effectively implemented.

► **Engaging with communities** to raise awareness on THB, promote education, and provide information on safe migration pathways

► Implementing **programmes that improve access to public health, education and employment.**

► **Discouraging demand** for services and products linked to THB. Such actions target markets for commercial sexual services, low-qualified jobs and low-paid labour. *“Smart regulation, combined with the cooperation of relevant stakeholders in specific contexts and sectors prone to trafficking and labour exploitation, is [...] an effective approach to addressing the demand-side of trafficking”*⁸. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) further notes an important observation. *“[...] Attention to demand is often limited to low intensity awareness campaigns, with more proactive forms of prevention, including deterrence and disruption initiatives generally not included in National Action Plans [against THB]”*.⁹

► **Addressing public procurement to prevent** THB for labour exploitation. In general, such actions could lead towards integration of due diligence procedures into every stage of the procurement process incl. the establishment of monitoring system for the provisions of the procurement contracts.

Example: Community-level prevention actions

In the framework of the School Anti-Trafficking Education and Advocacy Project – STEAP, ICMPD implements large-scale prevention activities targeting the communities across five Nigerian states of Benue, Delta, Edo, Enugu, and Ogun. The project reaches approximately 100,000 students in 250 schools helping them to become better informed, more vigilant, and resilient advocates in preventing trafficking in their schools and communities.

Among others, the initiative aims to transform schools into hubs of knowledge and prevention by establishing Anti-Trafficking Vanguard Clubs. These peer education groups are central to a whole-of-community approach that actively involves students, teachers, parents, and relevant stakeholders in reducing trafficking risks among school-aged children. The Vanguard Clubs focus on four core areas: awareness, empowerment, advocacy, and collaboration.

This initiative is a strategic investment in youth leadership and community protection — positioning students as key partners in the national effort to combat human trafficking.

Practical tool: Checklist for developing an effective awareness raising campaign

This template can be used to outline and structure an awareness action or campaign. Make sure to fill in as much information as possible before deciding on the actual type of action(s) that you will implement.

CAMPAIGN PLANNING CHART	
1 	NAME OF THE CAMPAIGN (optional)
2 	CAMPAIGN GOAL What would you like to achieve?
3 	TARGET GROUP(S) To whom is your message addressed?
4 	CAMPAIGN MESSAGE(S) ✓ Short ✓ Straightforward ✓ Positive for mutilation ✓ Always provide a solution
5 	COMMUNICATION CHANNELS Where will you share your campaign?
6 	CAMPAIGN PRODUCTS What materials/content will you create?
7 	EVALUATION MECHANISM How will measure the effect of your actions?

II. Actions for disrupting trafficking

Actions to identify and effectively interrupt THB while it is happening and prevent further escalation address law enforcement actors and other first-line responders who can get in direct contact with the victims as well as the general public and the end-users of services.

► Continuous **building of the capacity of first-line responders** in countries of transit and exploitation (law enforcement, travel companies, social workers, labour inspectors, border, migration and asylum authorities, medical staff, etc.) to identify possible cases of THB and victims.

Example: Build the capacities of asylum authorities to identify trafficked people

The asylum procedure presents an opportunity to identify cases of vulnerability to trafficking and of possible trafficking, which, if taken advantage of, can increase the identification of trafficked people among asylum applicants, and ensure that people have access to the protection measures and justice that they are entitled to.

Countries must incorporate screening for vulnerabilities and for potential trafficking cases into the asylum process, by providing specialist training to asylum authorities and through procedures for referral. Trafficked people who have a right to international protection should have access to both protection mechanisms. Trafficked people who do not have an asylum case should be granted residence permits as victims of trafficking.¹⁰

- ▶ Developing and using **screening tools** at the border checkpoints and migrant reception centres. Such tools already put in practise include, for instance, Interpol’s Biometric Hub, False and Authentic Documents Online system (FADO), operated by FRONTEX, Schengen Information System (SIS) used for alerts on missing persons or suspected traffickers, Passenger Name Record (PNR) systems used across the EU to flag suspicious travel patterns.

Example: Using biometric data to strengthen border security

The HOTSPOT initiative brings together INTERPOL National Central Bureaus (NCBs), intelligence, border police, and migration services. It provides a combination of technical infrastructure, mobile technology and training to deliver a sustainable and integrated mechanism to reinforce border security. Since 2019, it is implemented in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

HOTSPOT is designed as a flexible concept that can be implemented worldwide, according to the specific needs of member countries.¹¹

- ▶ **Monitoring and screening of recruitment agencies (especially private recruitment agencies) and employers** for potential abuse and exploitative practices. This is part of the due diligence process designed to prevent human trafficking, abuse of human rights, labour violations, etc. This may include monitoring and identifying signs of irregular recruitment fees charged to workers, contract deception, processing fake documents, deliberate recruitment of migrant workers from countries which lack embassies/diplomatic representation in the destination state, and many others.¹²
- ▶ Ensuring that a list with relevant for the country **indicators for identification of THB cases** are integral part of the national referral mechanism for trafficking victims and are used by the front-line responders in their daily work to identify such victims. The indicators are based on and adapted from the internationally recognised lists of International Labour Organisation (ILO)¹³ and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)¹⁴.
- ▶ **Awareness-raising** for the general public about the type of THB taking place in their communities and encouraging reporting to the authorities.

III. Actions to ensure people are not re-trafficked

Identifying and effectively stopping the reoccurrence of trafficking once the victim is already removed from the trafficking situation, requires victims to be supported in short and long-term, their needs to be addressed, so that they feel secure to continue their lives. These actions could include:

- ▶ **Establishing a protection net** for the victims after they are removed from the trafficking situation. It ensures the security and safety needed for recovery and empowerment of the victims to restart their lives. Such net requires that the relevant legislation and policies set interlinked and accessible protection mechanisms in sectors like health care, social protection, education, and employment.

EFFECTIVE PROTECTION FOR VICTIMS
EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO JUSTICE
EFFECTIVE MECHANISMS FOR
COMPENSATION OF VICTIMS

- ▶ Ensuring **effective access to justice** for victims of THB and prosecuting the traffickers. The capacity of the law enforcement authorities and judiciary needs to be systematically improved through trainings, encouraged cooperation and mutual support, guidance for accurate understanding and interpretation of the applicable anti-trafficking legislation.

- ▶ Establishing and effectively implementing **mechanisms for compensation of THB victims** – be it within a criminal case or civil claims. Dedicate state funds to the mechanisms.

Example: The role of public procurement of goods and services in preventing THB

Estimations provided by UNODC, OSCE and the EC show that trafficking for labour exploitation is steadily increasing – especially in the economic areas of agriculture, domestic work, construction, hospitality and garment industries.¹⁵ This requires implementation of public procurement policies to prevent THB and labour exploitation in supply chains. Recommended practices include:

- # Implementing trainings and workshops with staff of relevant public authorities to raise further capacity and awareness about how public procurement can play a crucial role in preventing THB/LE in supply chains.

- # Establishing ongoing dialog between public authorities and suppliers to discuss challenges and strategies around due diligence, supply chain monitoring and fair and ethical labour recruitment.

- # Ensuring that the public procurement measures are integral part of the national action plans on THB, Business and Human Rights, etc.¹⁶

The provisions and enforcement of procurement contracts must be monitored. Due diligence should be integrated into every stage. Policy makers and international organizations must ensure that their actions are guided by international tools and instruments, such as [the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) or the [ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy](#).¹⁷

HOW TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE PREVENTION

National anti-trafficking stakeholders should consider the following recommendations in the process of planning of strategies and actions to prevent THB:

- ▶ **Address prevention in its multilayered nature.** Develop and implement actions targeting different elements of the anti-trafficking response, including awareness-raising, education, economic empowerment, reducing the demand, legal reform, and social protection. While each intervention may focus on a specific aspect, all efforts should remain interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

- ▶ When **developing awareness campaigns**, add information on practical guidance, referral pathways, and available support services. Continuous and solution-oriented communication strengthens not only prevention but also identification, and protection efforts.

- ▶ **Focus actions on specific topics and areas of awareness.** Prioritize targeted interventions related to high-risk industries, recruitment practices, and specific trafficking patterns rather than relying solely on generic awareness campaigns. Avoid impersonal and general messages (such as “Stop trafficking!”) Instead, call for concrete actions. Tailored messaging allows prevention efforts to be more relevant, practical, and impactful. This approach improves understanding among at-risk populations and enhances the effectiveness of early identification and protection measures.

- ▶ **Adopt a participatory approach in all prevention actions.** Ensure that prevention initiatives are designed with meaningful input from those they target, so they reflect the real needs, experi-

ences, and cultural contexts. Victims of THB should be actively involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of actions. Their lived experience strengthens the relevance, credibility, and ethical grounding of prevention strategies.

► **Address root causes of THB.** Implement long-term strategies to reduce demand for exploitative services and address vulnerability factors like poverty, unemployment, lack of education, gender inequality, and social exclusion. Prevention efforts should be embedded within the broader development, labour, and social protection policies.

► **Strengthen legal, policy, and institutional frameworks.** Ensure that laws and policies are effectively implemented and regularly updated in line with international standards and changing THB trends. Operationalise trauma-informed and victim-centred approaches across all institutions involved in anti-trafficking responses, including continuous training of professionals, accountability mechanisms, and coordinated inter-institutional cooperation.

Practical tool: What to consider when planning prevention measures

Before implementing prevention actions, use the questions below to structure an effective response:

What behaviour is the intervention trying to change or reinforce among the target group?

What action do you want them to take?

How will these changed behaviours or actions contribute to reducing THB?

For example, through reducing the number of new victims, identifying existing victims, increasing reporting on THB cases, etc.

What evidence is available to suggest these actions will contribute to the desired outcomes?

What is the existing level of awareness among the target group(s)?

What barriers exist to the target group(s) adopting the desired behaviours or actions?

What are the most trusted information sources for the target group?

Should the target group be segmented and, if so, how?

For example, are separate messages or information sources needed for children and youth, men and women, ethnic minorities, different language groups, those with different education or literacy levels?

FURTHER READING

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Disclaimer

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Author: Madis Vainomaa and Ivanka Hainzl

Layout by Oksana Kalayda