

Findings of the TRIPS project: Problems with the identification of victims of trafficking in human beings among international protection beneficiaries in Czech Republic

As part of the European TRIPS project, non-profit organizations from France, Italy, Ireland, Belgium and Czech republic are working on how to provide the best necessary assistance and accesible care to international protection beneficiaries who have been trafficked.

In order to be able to obtain appropriate care based on their specific needs, international protection beneficiaries need to be identified as a victims of trafficking. However, the findings from the TRIPS analysis in Czech republic have shown that identifying victims of trafficking here is a significant challenge. Not only in the phase, when they are already international protection beneficiaries, but also in the phase of the asylum procedure, when they are applicants for international protection and the Ministry of Interior is to examine their asylum application. As the analysis in the project further showed, although these persons may be applicants for international protection, who have been trafficked, other facts are indicated as the reason for granting international protection to these persons.

However, if the person is no identified as a victim of trafficking in human beings during the asylum procedure, the probability of him or her being subsequently identified as such after granting international protection is even more reduced.

There can be several reasons why the problems with identifying victims of trafficking do exist.

One of them is the lack of relevant data. The Ministry of the Interior does not collect data on beneficiaries of international protection who have been trafficked. We do not even know how many international protection beneficiaries have already been identified as a victim of trafficking. Insufficient statistical data on the issue of trafficking in human beings were also pointed out, for example, by the Expert Group for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA). Data on trafficking in human beings are mainly limited to criminal investigations. At present, ensuring better data collection on victims of trafficking is part of the National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings for the period 2020-2023. Therefore, some improvement can be expected.

Another possible reason might be that there is no transfer of information on victims of trafficking between the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy of the Ministry of the Interior, which assesses asylum applications, and the Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of the Interior (SUZ), which provides applicants and beneficiaries of international protection with accommodation and help clients within the State Integration Program (SIP). If the client cooperates with one of the non-governmental organizations instead of SUZ within SIP, the situation is similar. This information is not passed on due to the protection of personal data of international protection beneficiaries. It is therefore up to beneficiaries themselves to share the facts concerning trafficking in human beings with the social worker who is conducting the initial interview with them. At the same time, much will depend on the motivation and sensitivity of social workers and their education in this topic, as the detection whether the client could be a victim of trafficking is not ascertained automatically. In addition, not all of those who have been granted international protection participate in SIP. It is therefore possible, that if it is a trafficked person, none of the state administration bodies will find out this information.

Another reason is also the fact that many applicants, including victims of trafficking in human beings, do not complete the asylum procedure in the Czech Republic. This is often due to the

length of the proceedings, which in the first instance before the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy may take up to 1 to 2 years. At the same time, the Czech Republic was the country with the lowest percentage of successful applicants for international protection in EU, not only in 2020, but also in previous years. The chances of obtaining international protection are therefore statistically very low. In the case of a negative decision, court proceedings follow, which may also last another year or two. Years of living in uncertainty than make vulnerable applicants, including victims of trafficking, even more vulnerable, and applicants eventually resolve the situation, for example, by ending the asylum prematurely and leaving the country.

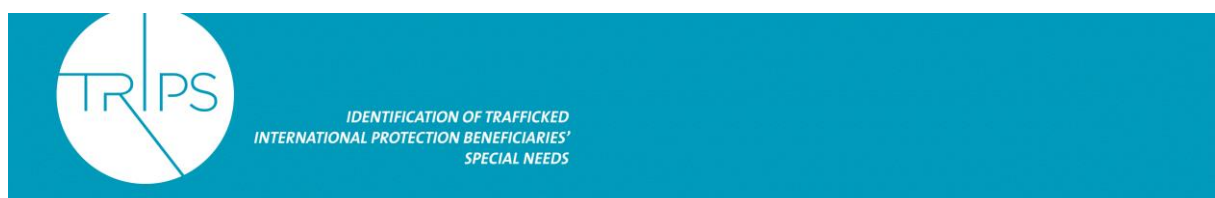
The identification of both applicants and international protection beneficiaries as victims of trafficking is crucial, as it opens up an access to state assistance and provision of the necessary specific care, including psychological and social assistance or the provision of safe accommodation.

Since 2015, only one applicant for international protection and none beneficiary of international protection has participated in the Program for the Support and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings which aims to support and ensure the safety of probable victims of trafficking in human beings who choose to testify before law enforcement authorities. The program offers to trafficked applicants and beneficiaries of international protection a wide range of specific services.

The necessary training of all relevant stakeholders can certainly contribute to a better identification of victim of trafficking in human beings among international protection beneficiaries. One of the outputs of the TRIPS project will also be a practical toolbox for all workers who may encounter victims of trafficking during the whole asylum process, as well as to the wider professional public interested in this issue. The aim of the toolbox is to provide necessary information about vulnerable group, how to work with these clients and offer practical guidelines how to identify the victims. Following the publication of the toolbox, the OPU will organize training so that the workers can learn and practice the obtained information.

This article was elaborated as part of the TRIPS project – identification of TRafficked International Protection beneficiaries' Special needs by Organization for Aid to Refugees. It is part of a series of articles on the TRIPS project elaborated by each project partner: [Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe](#), [Immigrant Council of Ireland](#), [Italian Council for Refugees](#), [Organization for Aid to Refugees](#).

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