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EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY TO SUPPRESS TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 2020-2023

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CEDES d.o.o., Sarajevo

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ACRONYMS

ADS - Agencija za državnu službu (Civil Service Agency)

AEPTM - Agency for Education and Professional Training in accordance with the needs of law enforcement

BDBiH – Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina

BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina

CEST - Centers for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training

CSO - Civil Society Organizations

EU – European Union

FBiH – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

GRETA – Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

MIT - Mobile Identification Team

MSBiH - Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina

MUP - Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova (Ministry of Interior)

NGO - Non-governmental organization

OSCE - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

RMT - Regional Monitoring Team

RS – Republika Srpska

SOP - Standard operating procedures for identification, referral and assistance for victims of trafficking in humans

PO - Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina

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I. GENERAL CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

I.1. Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) - objectives, background and implementation mechanisms

The Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) is a key strategic and planning document adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH in January 2020. The document is intended to support the establishment of a system capable of addressing human trafficking in accordance with international documents, and especially the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, and the *Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings*. The Strategy is also intended to implement recommendations provided by international mechanisms for monitoring, which primarily refers to the Council of Europe and the US State Department. The Strategy is also designed to implement recommendations of the European Commission provided in the *2019 Analytical Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union* and the *2018 Report of the EU expert mission on combatting trafficking in human beings*. Another objective is to make progress in implementing obligations from the Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011.

The main findings and conclusions of the European Commission, presented in *2019 Analytical Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union* are:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficking in human beings for forced begging, sexual exploitation, labor exploitation and forced marriages.
- A task force coordinates the fight against trafficking in human beings for the whole country. It operates smoothly, but its legal status needs to be better defined and its role strengthened.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to improve its technical capacities for swift reaction to trends in trafficking in human beings on the basis of risk analysis and intelligence gathering.
- The relevant agencies need to have better defined competences and must cooperate more efficiently.
- Prosecutors and law enforcement officers need to be better trained at recognizing and prosecuting trafficking in human beings also through effective financial investigations and work towards ensuring convictions.
- Evidence gathering and evidentiary proceedings in court trials should be standardized.
- On the prevention side, significant efforts are needed to prevent child trafficking, including through social services taking a more proactive role.
- Reintegrating child victims into their families requires careful monitoring to prevent re-victimization.

- Bosnia and Herzegovina must develop a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and victim-oriented approach to better identify and protect victims, especially children.
- International cooperation should also be stepped up in particular through a more active use of joint investigation teams and joint operations.

In the 2023 *Trafficking in Humans Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina*, BiH was listed as a Tier 2 “Watch List” country (next to lowest tier). The *Trafficking in Humans Report* places countries into tiers based on their alignment with standards from the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000) (TVPA). The key conclusions from the report are the following:

- The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included the State Coordinator organizing meetings to solicit feedback on regional monitoring teams, changing the structure, and revising guidelines for the teams to increase effectiveness and funding several NGOs.
- The government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period.
- Law enforcement lacked capacity and knowledge and continued to regularly investigate trafficking under lesser offenses, while judges issued sentences that fell short of the trafficking statutes’ minimum penalties and cited unreasonable “mitigating circumstances” to decrease the sentences.
- Law enforcement lacked victim-centered investigations and prosecutions, and the anti-trafficking strike force—the only mechanism to coordinate law enforcement efforts across entities—remained ineffective.
- In addition, the government identified fewer victims and lacked victim protection efforts, particularly efforts to proactively screen victims and provide assistance, which led to penalization of victims for unlawful acts that traffickers compelled them to commit.
- Victim assistance providers continued to lack resources and could not assist all domestic victims.

The key guidelines of the same report include:

- Implement the law that exempts victims from penalties for unlawful acts their traffickers compel them to commit, particularly victims of sex trafficking, forced begging, and forced criminality.
- Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers, including any complicit officials, and impose sentences that reflect the serious nature of the crime.
- Train first responders on victim identification and referral and increase proactive identification efforts.
- Allocate sufficient funding for NGO-run shelters and develop financial policies that effectively allocate funding for victim assistance.

- Improve cooperation and coordination among state and sub-state actors, including allocating adequate resources and assigning personnel to the anti-trafficking strike force.
- Increase law enforcement capacity and training to investigate complex cases.
- Train judges to understand the severity of trafficking when issuing sentences and sensitize prosecutors and judges to the issue of secondary trauma and victim centered approaches.
- Standardize victim assistance throughout the country, including the ability to access assistance and support outside of shelters and specialized assistance for male victims.
- Integrate Romani groups into decision-making processes regarding victim protection.

In the 2023 *Trafficking in Humans Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina* published by the US State Department in 2023, Bosnia and Herzegovina is classified as a Tier 2 country (which is an improvement compared to 2019). The key conclusions of that report are:

- The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period. These efforts included increasing overall prosecution efforts, convicting more traffickers.
- The government, with financial and technical assistance from an NGO, created five additional mobile teams to identify vulnerable populations and allocated funds to three local NGOs to organize awareness campaigns.
- However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government identified fewer victims and the Republika Srpska (RS) entity did not convict any traffickers.
- Law enforcement continued to lack capacity, resources, and technical knowledge, which hindered their ability to conduct effective and victim-centered investigations and prosecutions.
- The government lacked proactive identification efforts, resulting in victims sometimes penalized for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, particularly with misdemeanor charges for petty crimes or begging.
- Some authorities did not investigate cases of potential forced child begging and forced labor involving members of the Romani community but rather justified them as traditional cultural practices and customs and returned children to their families, even when their parents were involved in their exploitation.
- The government did not adopt the guidelines and standards for victim assistance and some cantonal governments did not budget honorariums for regional monitoring teams (RMTs), which hindered participation and coordination.

The key guidelines of the same report include:

- Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers and seek adequate penalties, involving, as appropriate, significant prison terms.
- Train first responders on victim identification and referral and increase proactive identification efforts, particularly for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and members of the Romani community.
- Ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, particularly victims of sex trafficking, forced begging, and forced criminality.
- Increase resources, personnel, and training for law enforcement to investigate complex trafficking cases.
- Continue to allocate sufficient funding for NGO-run shelters and victim service providers.
- Adopt and implement drafted guidelines and standards on providing victim assistance.
- Establish and implement policies to formally disconnect identification procedures and official victim status from cooperation on investigations and prosecutions.
- Establish and implement policies to formally disconnect identification procedures and official victim status from cooperation on investigations and prosecutions.
- Establish procedures to ensure trafficking cases are handled by trained prosecutors. Implement victim-centered approaches in prosecutions, particularly for children, and strengthen access to justice, such as allocating sufficient funding for NGOs providing legal assistance.
- Train judges to understand the severity of trafficking when issuing sentences and sensitize prosecutors and judges to the issues of secondary trauma and victim-centered approaches.
- Integrate Romani advocates into decision-making processes in anti-trafficking efforts.
- Train judges on restitution in criminal cases, establish procedures to seize assets from traffickers, and create effective methods to allocate restitution in a timely manner.
- Budget and disburse honorariums for all RMTs.

A comparison of the conclusions of the 2019 and 2023 State Department *Trafficking in Humans Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina* reveals moderate progress in the fight against human trafficking. Nevertheless, many issues that were observed in 2019 and relate to the functioning of the anti-trafficking system in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain fully or partially unresolved in 2023, with some of these issues periodically appearing in these reports. The reason for this is the reduced institutionalization of relevant processes, and a series of intervention activities carried out in cooperation with international partners and domestic NGOs (with reduced institutionalization of the results). The main progress (which has been constant) is seen in the significant efforts made by the BiH government

to meet the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking. The adopted and implemented Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) is part of these efforts, and the impact of the adoption and implementation of such a strategic document on the situation in the field of combating human trafficking is very positive. Nevertheless, the conclusions listed in the Reports from 2019 and 2023 indicate the need for a detailed assessment, first of all, of the relevance and effectiveness of the Strategic Document and the related Action Plan. This has been completed, and the results of the evaluation are presented below.

The Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) defined a strategic framework that was translated into the overall objective: "To ensure a continuous, comprehensive and sustainable response of society to trafficking in human beings through enhanced system of prevention, prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking crime offences, protection and assistance to victims of trafficking, especially vulnerable groups, by means of functional integration and capacity building of all relevant institutions and organizations."

The Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH also includes 5 specific objectives:

a) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1 - SUPPORT SYSTEM

To organize functional and sustainable **support systems for the prevention, suppression and, in particular, prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking crime offences in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, secured through various system oriented activities, the most important being:

- improving legal and the institutional frameworks and the coordination;
- capacity building;
- securing the financial resources necessary;
- conducting continuous monitoring and strategy implementation evaluation.

b) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2 - PREVENTION

Develop a proper perception and understanding of citizens and the professionals about trafficking in human beings, forms of human trafficking, its causes, risks and ways of responding in cases of identifying and recognizing situations of risk and/or threats to individuals and groups.

Develop mechanisms to prevent and limit the possibility of the emergence and subsistence of human trafficking, which will foster the proper response by formal social control bodies in creating an environment of empowering socially acceptable behaviors and **developing sustainable early warning systems for human trafficking cases.**

c) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3 – THE PROSECUTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING CRIMINAL OFFENSES

Enhancing **detection and prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking in human beings** and related crimes.

d) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4 – THE PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ensuring **sustainable programs and procedures for proactive protection and assistance for victims** of all forms of human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially for the vulnerable groups.

e) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 5 - PARTNERSHIP

Improve the **cooperation of competent institutions and authorized organizations, at all levels of government**, in order to more effectively confront, suppress, and combat various forms of trafficking in human beings in Bosnia and Herzegovina and at the international level.

I.2. Subject matter, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The evaluation of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) is carried out with the aim of assessing the level of implementation of the strategic document, the level of achievement of overall and specific objectives, and the effectiveness and efficiency of planned measures and direct results according to the set goals and expectations. The results of the implementation will be summarized and inputs will be provided for the planning process of the next strategic document.

The results of the evaluation are summarized in the form of the Report on Evaluation of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH 2020-2023.

Within the scope of activities, CEDES assessed the following:

- the relevance of current goals in relation to problems and needs on the ground with suggestions for potential new strategic directions and/or future specific objectives,
- the efficiency of the measures taken so far in achieving the planned results,
- effectiveness in achieving the planned goals by comparing the baseline with current indicators at the time of the evaluation,
- sustainability of the results achieved so far in implementing the Strategy.

CEDES also assessed the appropriateness and functionality of the platform for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy used by institutions and organizations for reporting purposes. Special emphasis was placed on separate parts of the platform used by institutions and organizations.

The collected data and information informed a set of recommendations for the development of future strategic documents.

Evaluation criteria included the following:

- Relevance (alignment) of selected goals with established problems and public needs,
- Efficiency – the ratio of planned and realized effects and predicted (expended) resources in order to achieve an optimal result,
- Effectiveness – the scope of achieved goals from the strategic document established by comparing base-line and achieved values of performance indicators,
- Sustainability – durability of positive changes and effects.

Based on the conducted analysis and assessment, the evaluation determined the following:

- Identified obstacles and difficulties in the implementation of the strategy,
- Formulated recommendations and ways to overcome identified difficulties,
- Formulated recommendations for the development of the next strategic document (2024-2027).

The basis for the evaluation of the strategy were the following documents officially adopted by BiH institutions:

- Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH 2020-2023 (adopted in January 2020 by the Council of Ministers of BiH),
- Action Plan of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Implementation of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH 2020-2023 (adopted in 2020 by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The evaluators also used other documents and reports published by BiH institutions, as well as international organizations, along with reports published by the Council of Europe and the US State Department. All the documents are shown in ***The list of references in Appendix I.***

Some key facts to consider when determining the scope of the evaluation of this strategy are:

- Many competences and operational activities related to combating human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the responsibilities of lower levels of government (entity level, cantonal level in FBiH, and local units of self-government). It is activities at lower levels that will ultimately determine the success of implementation of the objectives of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH 2020-2023.
- Although the evaluation does not explicitly include the activities of lower levels of government, the key elements of suitability and performance related to the strategic goals and measures, and the activities defined by the Action Plan, can be obtained from members of various bodies that also include representatives of lower levels of government (FBiH, RS, BDBiH, cantons, etc.).

- Key problems in this area that arise in practice and need to be targeted in the next strategic document can be observed through interviews with members of the aforementioned working bodies (both at the state and lower levels of government in BiH).

For these reasons, the evaluation team decided to carry out the research needed for the evaluation of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in BiH 2020-2023 through interviews with representatives of lower levels of government and members of working bodies at lower levels of government in BiH.

2. METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES

2.1. Methodology and tools

In order to carry out the evaluation, a mixed methodology was used, including quantitative and qualitative methods, but with a stronger emphasis on qualitative methods.

Task #1: Review of available and archived documentation related to the fight against human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

a) Analysis of available documents:

The main analytical tool included a detailed analysis of key documentation, including primarily the following:

- Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH 2020-2023 (adopted in January 2020 by the Council of Ministers of BiH)
- Action Plan of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Implementation of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH 2020-2023 (adopted in 2020 by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina).
- Analytical Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union from 2019, European Commission
- Trafficking in Humans Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina of the US State Department for 2019
- Trafficking in Humans Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina of the US State Department for 2021
- Trafficking in Humans Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina of the US State Department for 2022
- Third Evaluation Round Report for BiH (2022) - Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)
- Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022 (UNDOC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)
- The Report on the state of human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020 and 2021, State Coordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings
- Other documents, plans and reports, from BiH institutions (and lower levels of government), international organizations, the Council of Europe, the US State Department, etc., are provided in Appendix I of the evaluation report.

The process of compiling and analyzing existing documentation was completed by July 10, 2023.

Documentation was analyzed using the desk review techniques, complemented with an analytical triangulation of information from various sources.

b) Analysis of the platform for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy

A separate segment of the evaluation is focused on the assessment of the adequacy and performance of the platform for monitoring the Strategy implementation (statistical portal) used by institutions and organizations for reporting purposes. The representatives of the evaluation team were given access to the platform and individuals at the Ministry of Security of BiH who manage the platform and are familiar with its structure.

The analysis of the platform for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy was based on information collected through:

- Individual semi-structured interviews
- Focus groups
- Direct access to the platform

The process of compiling and collecting information was completed on 07/15/2023.

c) Analysis of the Vulnerability Assessment app

The evaluation team also analysed the adequacy and performance of the application for assessing vulnerability through interviews and focus groups. The process of collecting and analyzing information was completed on July 15, 2023.

Task #2: Field work and data collection

d) Interviews with key actors and focus groups

The process of collecting data (both quantitative and qualitative) with key actors involved focus groups and semi-structured interviews based on questionnaires.

Semi-structured interviews were used with a group of individuals who were involved in the development of the Strategy and Action Plan and/or were involved in the implementation and monitoring, in order to collect as much information as possible from the field, in the form of opinions and experiences of key actors in the process. Separate questionnaires used in semi-structured interviews were developed for the following groups:

- a) Coordinators (at state level and lower levels of government).

- b) Task Force members
- c) International organizations
- d) Non-governmental organizations:
- e) General population (citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina)

The purpose of the questionnaire was:

- to define the challenges faced by the key actors in the fight against human trafficking and in the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan
- assess the relevance of the goals, measures and activities defined in the Strategy and Action Plan
- check the effectiveness in achieving the planned goals (through reaching indicators).
- Assess the operability, coherence and coordination of the anti-trafficking system in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Assess the impact of defined strategic goals, measures and activities on the operational ability of institutions and organizations at all levels of government to effectively and efficiently combat human trafficking in BiH

Analyzing and comparing a multitude of subjective opinions and objective facts resulted in an objective overview of common problems, and attitudes and opinions on the topics mentioned above.

An overview of the interviews and focus groups is provided in Appendix 2 of this report; **Interview questionnaires and focus group guidelines are provided in Appendix 3** of this report.

Experts developed 8 questionnaires related to the specific objectives of the Strategy, tailored to specific groups of informants who will participate in the process.

Selected representatives of key actors were interviewed because their experiences and opinions are a useful source of information about the functioning of the anti-trafficking system in BiH, while also being able to offer insight about the possibility of implementing activities on the ground at the regional and local level, where they are often the ones responsible for setting things in motion on the ground. The purpose of the interview was to gather information about the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of key actors who are in charge of anti-trafficking activities and participated in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) in the capacity of implementers and beneficiaries of the results of the measures.

The key questions (topics) that this evaluation explored are the following:

- How does the Working Group coordinate anti-trafficking efforts across the country? Is the Working Group functioning well? How is its legal status defined? Is its role strong enough and does its work have practical implications on lower levels of government where there is an entire set of useful mechanisms for fighting human trafficking?

- How does BiH collect intelligence data related to human trafficking? Is the victim identification process well planned and are practical mechanisms used? Who analyses risks and intelligence data and what implications do these analyses have in terms of Bosnia and Herzegovina reaction to human trafficking trends? What are the capacities of the institutions involved in anti-trafficking efforts and what are the key limitations and problems they face?
- Do relevant agencies have clearly defined competencies in the process of combating human trafficking? What is the cause-and-effect relationship of their activities? Horizontal and vertical cooperation?
- Do prosecutors and law enforcement officers have enough knowledge and experience to prosecute trafficking in human beings and work towards ensuring convictions? Were trainings held? What is the quality of training? What is the cooperation between law enforcement and the prosecutor's office like?
- Are evidence gathering and evidentiary proceedings in court trials standardized and how?
- What is the role of social services in preventing child trafficking and protecting victims?
- How common are cases of re-victimization of children after reintegration into their families? What is done to prevent this? What are the competent institutions and what practice is use to detecting re-victimization of children?
- Did Bosnia and Herzegovina develop a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and victim-oriented approach to better identify and protect victims, especially children? How does this work in practice (examples of child trafficking, begging)?
- What is the level of international cooperation in terms of joint investigation teams and joint operations? How does the system of international cooperation operate? Which institutions are involved and responsible? Who initiates international cooperation and how?
- Do you think the government invests enough efforts to combat trafficking in human beings?
- Do the police still investigate human trafficking offenses as misdemeanors due to a lack of capacity and knowledge? How will you prove that the situation has improved? Do judges issued sentences that fall short of the trafficking statutes' minimum penalties and do they cite unreasonable "mitigating circumstances" to decrease the sentences? How will you prove that the situation has improved?
- How do we ensure that prosecution and law enforcement conduct victim-focused investigations and prosecutions? What needs to be changed and improved?
- Has the anti-trafficking Task Force (the only mechanism that coordinates law enforcement efforts across entities) improved their efficiency? In what way? What results were achieved?
- Is the practice of punishing victims for breaking the law under the coercion of human traffickers still used as grounds for punishing victims? Where, in what part of BiH? What is the problem with victim identi-

cation (in each category, such as women, children, workers, etc.)? Why are the victims not provided with adequate help? What is adequate victim support?

- Who are the key providers of victim support? Who provides assistance to victims and how? Are sufficient financial and material resources available for supporting victims? List the types of assistance offered to victims in each vulnerable group, and the funds allocated either by international organizations or under public budgets.

The method of asking informants to offer the best solution to perceived weaknesses, problems or limitations, from their own perspective, will be used in the process of planning the next strategy.

Each question will be tailored to each target group of informants (5 target groups: Coordinators (at the state and lower levels of government); Members of the Task Force; International organizations; Non-governmental organizations; General public (citizens). Separate questionnaires for each target group are provided in Appendix 3 of this report

Interviews with key actors and focus groups were completed on 14 July 2023.

e) General population survey

One of the tools proposed by the CEDES evaluation team was a survey of the general population of BiH about their perception of anti-trafficking activities, results of activities and relevant processes. The online survey was created by the CEDES team, approved by the Human Rights Activity (USAID/INSPIRE) and published on the social media accounts of institutions and organizations, the Human Rights Activity (USAID/INSPIRE), and CEDES. The survey was created in Google forms. **The survey questionnaire for the general population is provided in Appendix 4** of the report. CEDES promoted the survey through its social media profiles, in order to increase the reach and recruit participants from different groups and all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The target population is the entire population of BiH (without demographic preferences (age, gender, geographical location, racial, national or religious affiliation, etc.). A representative sample is 300 random users of social media in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The survey of the general population was completed on 07/19/2023, and the results were taken into account when compiling the evaluation report. **The results of the general population survey are presented in Appendix 5 of this report.**

Task #3: Presentation of preliminary evaluation findings

f) Draft evaluation report

Using the collected data, the outcomes of interviews, focus groups and a survey of the population of BiH, the expert team drafted a report and presented preliminary findings and recommendations to representatives of

the Ministry of Security of BiH and the Human Rights Activity (USAID/INSPIRE). The draft evaluation report was submitted to the BiH Ministry of Security and the Human Rights Activity (USAID/INSPIRE) for review, and the final version of the conclusions and recommendations (based on an informed and well-reasoned approach to the evaluation process) will be included in the final evaluation report.

This task was completed on September 1, 2023.

Task #4: Finalizing the evaluation report

g) Finalizing the evaluation report

The task included the delivery of the final evaluation report with corresponding attachments, after integrating comments by the Ministry of Security of BiH and the Human Rights Activity (USAID/INSPIRE).

The final evaluation report will include, at a minimum, the following sections:

- executive summary,
- list of tables, charts, schemes and other illustrations,
- key evaluation findings and conclusions,
- a description of the evaluation methodology, including a description of key terms, an overview of evaluation instruments, evaluation criteria and goals,
- review of specific evaluation goals, including evaluation of the progress of the implementation of strategic goals, priorities and measures according to the defined indicators;
- a set of recommendations for developing a new strategic document,
- list of Appendices with key information sources, and
- databases, archival materials, audio and/or video recordings, transcripts, and similar primary sources of information.

The final evaluation report was presented on September 14, 2023.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.1. Main findings of the evaluation

Relevance: Based on the analysis of data from the monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy, the solicited opinions and attitudes of the informants who are direct participants in the planning and implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan, based on the analysis of reports and recommendations provided by international monitoring mechanisms, primarily the Council of Europe and the US State Department from 2019, as well as the problems that the institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina identified during that period, the evaluation team determined that the Overall Objective, and the Specific Objectives of the Strategy, fully encompassed and addressed the key issues as well as key recommendations. Those reports emphasized several key topics and areas that needed to be improved, primarily related to:

- Defining the legal status of the bodies established within the anti-trafficking system and strengthening their role.
- Ensuring resources for the functioning of all bodies (especially at lower levels of government) participating in the anti-trafficking system.
- Improving the efficiency of the cooperation of competent agencies and working bodies formed within the anti-trafficking system in BiH (horizontal and vertical coordination), with clearly defined responsibilities and obligations.
- Building the capacities of courts, prosecutors, and law enforcement to identify potential victims, and more effectively prosecute perpetrators of the criminal offense of human trafficking.
- Implementation of preventive activities in cooperation with all bodies involved in the system (including social services).
- Developing a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and victim-oriented approach to better identify and protect victims, especially children.

Although Specific Objective 1 notes the need for amendments to the criminal law in BiH, there is a lack of focus on amendments to other laws and regulations in other areas included in the system of combating human trafficking (prevention, protection of victims, compensation, social protection, education, health care, labor, etc.) which somewhat diminishes the relevance of this Specific Objective, which should be addressed in the next planning period. Specific Objective 2 recognizes prevention as a key element in the fight against human trafficking and other forms of criminality. All the methodological approaches to anti-trafficking are based on prevention and creating conditions for preventing and suppressing human trafficking and developing sustainable early warning systems for human trafficking cases. The competent institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina recognized this and incorporated it into Specific Objective 2. However, there are some elements that were not in focus or were minimized in the action plan and strategic programs, especially in terms of building anti-trafficking mechanisms and sustainable early

warning systems. These must be addressed in the next planning period. Specific Objective 3 addresses the detection and prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking and related crimes. The part related to improving the protection of the rights of victims in criminal proceedings is omitted in the definition of the Specific Objective; however, this is a technical error that was corrected in the Action Plan and strategic programs for improving the protection of victims in criminal proceedings.

Specific Objective 4 addresses most of the recommendations from the reports of international monitoring mechanisms, primarily the Council of Europe and the US State Department. The recommendations concern the harmonization of indicators for identifying victims of human trafficking, education on victim identification, coordination, and the adoption of minimum standards for the protection of victims, compensation for victims of human trafficking, free legal aid and funding for NGOs that run safe houses. One drawback is the lack of activities related to the self-assessment of victims of human trafficking and activities related to providing information and referrals that come after the self-reporting process, which also entails informing victims about their rights (victim referral process). Some important issues have been left out, such as raising awareness about human trafficking, specifically about offenses committed by users of services provided by victims of human trafficking and labor exploitation, and training actors in the business sector to identify victims of human trafficking. Another key drawback is the lack of a clearly structured institutional response and coordination of activities (horizontal and vertical) implemented by institutions that can contribute to improving the process of identifying victims of human trafficking. All this needs to also take place on the local level (where processes happen on the ground), i.e. there needs to be a standardized course of action for the identification of victims of human trafficking. Specific Objective 5, two main types of activities/strategic programs were designed to achieve the planned results. The first program focuses on improving cooperation with key civil society actors, trade unions, the private sector and the academic community. The second program is aimed at improving international cooperation, recognizing the importance of synchronized action and sharing information with other countries and international organizations. Taking into account the proposed strategic programs, it can be concluded that Specific Objective 5 is not well articulated, because the definition itself focuses on “cooperation between competent institutions and authorized organizations at all levels of government” without mentioning international cooperation, although one of the strategic programs is clearly focused on international cooperation. The structure of the strategic document itself is atypical, and did not make use of any of the methodologies recognized as good practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is a lack of indicators at all levels, including baseline and target values, and allocated funding for the planned activities.

Efficiency: The efficiency of the implementation of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) should be monitored based on the number of implemented activities defined in the Action Plan, and the spending of the allocated financial resources for the implementation of the defined activities. This is not possible for this Strategy and its corresponding Action Plan, because allocated funding amounts were not included in the Action Plan itself, which instead listed only potential sources of funding. The Strategy is monitored through the annual Report on anti-trafficking and on the implementation of the Strategy for the Suppression of Human Trafficking in BiH (2020-2023), which provided information about 2020 and 2021. Some information about activities in 2022 and 2023 was obtained during the evaluation process through interviews and focus groups. A small proportion of activities in the Action Plan had not been implemented at the time of evaluation, and there was no confirmation that these activities would be successfully completed by the end of 2023. Overall, the achieved re-

sults demonstrate significant effort and commitment to achieving the goals of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings, but also show the need for even more efforts in improving the strategic planning process and implementation of the Strategy, and the need to secure more public funding from BiH institutions.

Effectiveness: Without synchronized activities of all levels of government in BiH (with robust and regulated horizontal and vertical coordination), anti-trafficking efforts will yield results, casting doubt on the effectiveness of the Strategy. Overall, there are several aspects of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) that reduce its effectiveness or may reduce it in the future, and need to be addressed urgently:

- The lack of a clearly defined and fully structured, legally and institutionally regulated Referral Mechanism, as well as a system of horizontal and vertical coordination, clearly and precisely defined tasks, obligations and responsibilities of the formed bodies;
- Lack of vertical alignment of laws and regulations in related areas, which should play a role in the system of combating human trafficking (education, health, social protection, work and employment, etc.);
- The lack of strong commitment of governments to allocate budget funds for activities makes the established system vulnerable;
- Weakened focus of action plans (at all levels) on solving real problems, and taking over activities at lower levels without considering real needs;
- Due to the lack of institutionalization, some processes (reporting on action plan implementation and entering data into the digital IT statistical portal) at lower levels of government depends on coordinator agility or is negatively impacted by the political landscape (e.g. in RS);
- Research does not result in concrete guidelines for making improvements (applied research);
- The effectiveness of awareness raising campaigns is diminished due to inadequate planning and lack of reporting on campaign impacts;
- Lack of NGO advocacy for institutional and legal action (systemic solutions), preferring to focus on intervention;
- Lack of alignment with other strategic documents, such as, for instance, the Action plan for Roma and other strategic documents;
- Lack of focus on building mechanisms that will prevent and limit the possibility of human trafficking occurring, create an environment that fosters socially acceptable behavior and develop sustainable early warning systems for human trafficking cases;
- Lack of continuity in improving human resources and upgrading technical equipment of police agencies, especially the Border Police (which is chronically understaffed);
- Lack of active involvement of institutions in the protection of victims' rights in criminal proceedings;
- Inadequate use of an IT tool called the "Vulnerability Assessment" app - it is necessary to restructure the way the app is used, to better correspond to its purpose and utility;

- Lack of focus on training in victim identification, inadequate training target groups and training participants, questionable expertise of lecturers, lack of training offered by competent institutions whose scope of work includes training;
- Lack of focus on victim identification processes at the local level, through local institutions and bodies such as Mobile Identification Teams (which were formed in some local units of self-government);
- Lack of quality cooperation with the academic community on introducing appropriate curricula;
- Lack of results of international cooperation in terms of signing agreements with other countries (in the region and beyond);

Sustainability: Overall, the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) has several aspects that diminish or have the potential for future negative impacts on sustainability, and that need to be urgently addressed. These are:

- Lack of in-depth (vertical) harmonization of laws and regulations of related areas, which should have a role in the system of combating human trafficking (education, health, social protection, etc.);
- The lack of a clearly defined and structured, legally and institutionally regulated referral mechanism, compounded by the lack of a system for horizontal and vertical coordination, clearly and precisely defined tasks, obligations and competences of relevant bodies;
- Inconsistency in rules governing work (at different levels of government) and different treatments of honorariums across coordination teams;
- The lack of strong commitment of governments to allocate budget funds for activities makes the established system vulnerable;
- Relatively low participation of institutions, organizations and professionals working on the ground, from various fields, in the planning and implementation of prevention activities (and awareness raising campaigns), and a heavy reliance on the non-governmental sector in these processes;
- Civil society organizations focus on intervention support for members of the Roma community, and there is very little advocacy for amendments to laws and regulations, or the improvement and harmonization of this strategic program with other strategic documents such as the Action plan for Roma and other strategic documents;
- Chronic understaffing in law enforcement agencies and the high turnover of staff (both within agencies and from one agency or institution to another);
- The lack of systemic institutional training activities for judges and prosecutors through the Centers for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training, which would allow the adopted protocols (of the HJPC) to truly contribute to improving of proceedings in cases of human trafficking;
- Lack of adequate and continuous institutional support for victims, that would allow them access to ade-

quate legal aid during the entire criminal proceeding. Lack of institutionalization when it comes to providing free legal aid (relying exclusively on CSO-led activities);

- The lack of institutionalization of very important local working bodies like MIT, which also entails a lack of financial sustainability of such bodies;
- Lack of institutionalization of trainings related to the protection of victims of human trafficking;
- International organizations taking initiative to fill the gap caused by the inertia of domestic institutions (at different levels of government) can lead to unsustainable processes and results. This issue should be taken into account in the future.

3.2. Main conclusions of the evaluation

Conclusion - Relevance: The Overall Objective defined in the Strategy as well as the specific objectives are relevant, i.e. mostly aligned with the needs and key issues in the fight against human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both the overall and specific objectives that are defined in the Strategy have been assessed as relevant for the future as well, but it is certainly necessary to restructure some strategic programs and activities, and add new ones that will respond to real needs. The relevance of Specific Objective 1 is partly diminished by the lack of amendments to laws and regulations in other areas included in the system of combating human trafficking (prevention, protection of victims, compensation, social protection, education, health care, labor, etc.) which should be prioritized in the next planning period. The relevance of Specific Objective 2 is partly reduced because the strategic programs defined in the Action Plan failed to focus on some aspects of Specific Goal 2 (such as designing an early warning system, establishing effective mechanisms to prevent human trafficking, or creating an environment that reinforces socially acceptable behavior). These issues need to be addressed in the next planning period. Specific Objective 3 reflects the importance of improving technical and institutional aspects of the prosecution of human trafficking offenses, and is very relevant. The high relevance of Specific Objective 4 is partly diminished by the lack of strategic programs and activities related to the self-assessment of victims of human trafficking and activities related to providing information and referrals that come after the self-reporting (victim referral process), and the lack of activities targeting human trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation. Specific Objective 5 is focused on efficient cooperation and mutual support between competent institutions and authorized organizations (including NGOs, academies, etc.) in the fight against human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Specific Objective 5 is not well articulated, because the definition itself focuses on “cooperation between competent institutions and authorized organizations at all levels of government” without mentioning international cooperation; however, taking into consideration the strategic program definitions, the objective is essentially relevant. The structure of the strategic document itself is atypical, and future strategies should make use of some of the methodologies recognized as good practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would result in a clear vertical structure of the strategy and implementation document, and contain indicators at all levels, including baselines and target values, and allocated funding for the planned activities. **Taking all the aforementioned into account, it can be concluded that the**

Overall and Specific Objectives of this Strategy are highly relevant for the Strategy (2020-2030) and for future planning. It is, however, important to address the issues that diminish relevance.

Conclusion - Efficiency: Taking into account the circumstances in which the Strategy and the Action Plan were created and implemented, the political instability in BiH which inevitably affects the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan, available human resources, as well as the scarcity of budget funds allocated for the implementation of activities, it can be concluded that most activities were successfully implemented **and that the implementation efficiency of the Strategy (Action Plan) is moderate to high.** When developing future strategic documents and corresponding action plans, it is important to use a format that allows for clearer definitions of the indicators and that follows the standardized structure that includes an overall objective, specific objectives, priorities, measures, programs/projects, and clear indicator values (baseline and target values) for different levels of indicators. It is also important to associate allocated funding amounts with individual activities, which is currently done only for a few activities that are financed through public budgets. The situation described above may indicate the need to secure additional resources (human and financial) and improve cooperation between institutions in the process of implementing activities related to criminal prosecution and other anti-trafficking areas. These considerations need to be taken into account when planning the next strategic document.

Conclusions - Effectiveness Analysis of the effects of some Strategic Programs show that the lack of a clearly defined and structured, legally and institutionally regulated referral mechanism diminishes the effectiveness of most of the implemented measures and activities. Poor effectiveness can be observed in activities that are generally related to the establishment or harmonization of the legislative and regulatory framework and activities aimed at improving the institutional framework (increased institutionalization of processes and institutional ownership of the results of implemented activities). Furthermore, the lack of public funding for Strategic Programs, and relying almost exclusively on international organizations for funding, does not contribute to the effective implementation of the Strategy. Public awareness was raised through numerous activities of institutions and civil society organizations, but the results of those campaigns in certain segments were assessed as relatively low, pointing to the need to improve the planning and implementation of campaigns and analyze the achieved results/effects of such campaigns. The Department for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, which operates within the MoS-BiH, needs to assume a coordinating role in the cooperation with all international organizations/institutions and the non-governmental sector; in designing, implementing and analyzing the results of all anti-trafficking campaigns conducted in BiH. Strategic programs related to prevention were not aimed at building mechanisms for preventing human trafficking, involving all relevant target groups in activities, and promoting socially acceptable behavior and early warning systems (not defined with enough precision). The focus in future planning processes should be on these issues. The formation of unsustainable anti-trafficking bodies, a large number of working bodies at different levels of government without clear tasks and competences (such as the network of specialized prosecutors and investigators) also diminished effectiveness. The lack of institutionalization (and vertical synchronization) can negatively impact the work of those bodies (whose work will then depend on the political situation, the commitment of individuals, etc.). On the other hand, the Trafficking Prosecution Protocol adopted by the HJPC (4 Protocols for more effective human trafficking prosecutions in four areas: Compensation for trafficking victims; non-punishment of victims of human trafficking; criminal prosecution for using the services of victims of human trafficking; prosecution of legal entities for human trafficking) are a step in the right direction, and greatly contribute to effectiveness.

The Task Force membership structure needs to be changed to ensure that permanent members are individuals who have passed security checks, and as such could participate in the exchange of information and directing investigations that are marked “confidential”. This would allow for the activities of the Task Force to be more clear and concrete, and would also increase effectiveness. The institutionalization of the process of education and training of institutions/professionals in the anti-trafficking system, at all levels of government, would also contribute to the improving effectiveness. The deficiencies that diminish the effectiveness need to be addressed, and include the following: appropriateness and usability of the vulnerability assessment application (helping users understand the purpose of app, functionalities aligned with purpose, etc.), the lack of an institutional approach in the design and implementation of training, which is also reflected in the quality of training, the absence of elements that ensure adequate protection of victims, such as access to education for children in safe houses, lack of emergency accommodation (72 hours), the lack of official procedures for overseeing the operation of safe houses (in terms of the adequacy of the protection provided to victims), inadequate provision of legal aid by competent institutions, and the lack of rigorous structuring, standardization and strict institutional monitoring of the activities of all actors. The effects of establishing and strengthening international cooperation are evident, and these efforts need to continue and accelerate. This entails the ratification of relevant international conventions as signing bilateral agreements with neighboring countries (and other countries). Nevertheless, taking into account the baseline situation (from 2019) and the political conditions in which the Strategy was created and implemented, significant progress has been made, and **it can be concluded that the Strategy effectiveness is moderate.**

Conclusion - Sustainability:

The most significant elements that diminish the sustainability of the Strategy and jeopardize the sustainability of important positive changes achieved through the implementation of this Strategy are:

- Lack of in-depth (vertical) harmonization of laws and regulations of related areas, which should have a role in the system of combating human trafficking (education, health, social protection, etc.).
- Lack of focus on amending the legislative and regulatory framework. Laws that do not correspond to actual needs can be a significant obstacle.
- The lack of a clearly defined and structured, legally and institutionally regulated referral mechanism, compounded by the lack of a system for horizontal and vertical coordination, clearly and precisely defined tasks, obligations and competences of relevant bodies;
- Inconsistency in rules governing work (at different levels of government) and different treatments of honorariums across coordination teams;
- The lack of strong commitment of governments to allocate budget funds for activities makes the established system vulnerable;
- A large number of working bodies at all levels of government (whose work cannot be considered fully institutionalized, or fully regulated, and depends on the political situation, and dedication of individuals, etc.).
- The provision of legal assistance and support to victims of human trafficking in exercising their right to

compensation for non-pecuniary damages and the protection of victims of human trafficking, are still not fully defined, regulated and overseen by competent institutions, which should take on a more significant role and discharge their duties.

- The low level of involvement of professionals from different sectors in the planning and implementation of activities is a potential risk that should be addressed by improving two-way communication.
- International organizations taking initiative to fill the gap caused by the inertia of domestic institutions (at different levels of government) can lead to unsustainable processes and results. This issue should be taken into account in the future.

This is precisely why the sustainability of the Strategy is assessed as moderate. These problems need to be addressed adequately in the next planning process. Overall, the sustainability of the results of the activities carried out can be improved by continuous engagement, coordination and institutional support, stronger institutionalization and clear regulation of the processes in the anti-trafficking system, in order to ensure a long-term and effective fight against human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3.3. Main recommendations from the evaluation

The key recommendations presented as the results of this evaluation are classified into three main groups of recommendations (Chapter 6).

The first group of recommendations refers to the process of developing the next strategic document (2024 – 2027). These recommendations address issues related to the structure of the strategic document and the action plan, and offers guidelines for using adequate methodologies recognized as good practice in the preparation of the strategic document. This will facilitate better monitoring of the efficiency and effectiveness of strategy implementation in the future.¹

The second group of recommendations refers to issues related to the insufficient institutionalization of certain anti-trafficking processes, and the need for a clearly structured anti-trafficking system that would be embedded in a robust legal, regulatory and institutional framework at the BiH level. Recommendations also point to the need to unambiguously define and regulate competences and obligations of all actors in the anti-trafficking system, including horizontal and vertical coordination (and especially vertical synchronization).

The third group of recommendations refers to deficiencies in the processes related to the prevention, identification of victims and perpetrators of human trafficking offenses, criminal prosecution, protection of victims of human trafficking, and the establishment of partnerships within BiH (institutions and NGOs, academia, etc.), and international cooperation.

¹ Strategic planning in the EU planning time frame (seven-year period). The current seven-year period is 2021-2027.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1. Evaluation findings on relevance

The overall objective defined in the Strategy is: “To ensure a continuous, comprehensive and sustainable response of society to trafficking in human beings through an enhanced system of prevention, prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking criminal offences, protection and assistance to victims of trafficking, especially vulnerable groups, by means of functional integration and capacity building of all relevant institutions and organizations.”

The Overall Objective of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) addresses the situation from 2019, which is described in reports and recommendations provided by international monitoring mechanisms, primarily the Council of Europe and the US State Department. It also addresses problems identified by institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those reports highlighted several key topics and areas that need to be improved, and are primarily related to:

- Defining the legal status of bodies established within the anti-trafficking system and strengthening their role,
- Ensuring resources for the functioning of all bodies (especially at lower levels of government) participating in the anti-trafficking system,
- Strengthening the efficiency of the cooperation of competent agencies and working bodies formed within the anti-trafficking system in BiH (horizontal and vertical coordination), with clearly defined responsibilities and obligations,
- Building the capacities of courts, prosecutor's offices, and law enforcement to identify potential victims, and prosecute perpetrators more efficiently,
- Carrying out preventive activities in cooperation with all bodies involved in the anti-trafficking system (including social services),
- Developing a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and victim-oriented approach to better identify and protect victims, especially children,
- Providing adequate training and building the capacities of all participants in the fight against human trafficking (institutions),
- Strengthening partnerships and international cooperation in this area.

The Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) and the corresponding Action Plan were drawn up and adopted by the competent institutions with the main goal of addressing the key issues and recommendations related to the functioning of all elements of the anti-trafficking system.

a) *SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE I - SUPPORT SYSTEM*

The Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020 - 2023) (Strategy) includes Specific Objective I: "To organize a functional and sustainable system of support in the prevention, suppression and especially criminal prosecution of human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ensured through various system-oriented activities, the most important of which are:

- improvement of legal and institutional frameworks and coordination;
- capacity building;
- securing the financial resources necessary;
- conducting continuous monitoring and Strategy implementation evaluation.

Anti-trafficking is a continuous process which evolves over time, depending on the needs and problems that arise. Its institutionalization in BiH began with the establishment of the role of State Coordinator for Combating Trafficking, back in 2003. In 2003, the Council of Ministers of BiH issued a decision on procedures and methods of coordination of anti-trafficking activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and establishing the role of State Coordinator. The aim was to implement a shared policy and procedures for competent authorities participating in anti-trafficking efforts, and ensure effective coordination of activities that fall under the jurisdiction of different institutions.

In the Action Plan for Suppressing Trafficking in Humans in BiH for the 2008-2012 period, the Council of Ministers of BiH established regional monitoring teams, bearing in mind the responsibilities and roles of institutions at all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and non-governmental organizations participating in the fight against human trafficking. Their intention was to further improve institutional capacities for implementing the legal framework and providing adequate assistance and protection to victims of trafficking. The four regional monitoring teams are active in: Sarajevo; Mostar; Banja Luka; and Tuzla.

The Council of Ministers also issued a decision forming a Task Force to fight human trafficking and organized illegal immigration as a form of organized crime. ("Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina" No. 3/04). The Task Force operates throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina and includes representatives of prosecutors' offices, internal affairs, tax authorities, the financial police, the state border service, i.e. all actors who can contribute to the fight against human trafficking and illegal immigration.

Both the Task Force for Combating Human Trafficking (Task Force), as well as the regional monitoring teams (4 teams) experienced ups and downs in their work in the period up to 2019. The Task Force was inactive at times, and the 4 regional monitoring teams were very difficult to coordinate because their structure does not correspond to the administrative structure of BiH and involves a multitude of different institutional and non-institutional actors. This led to a lack of concrete results in the fight against human trafficking. Problems in the work of the Task Force started growing from 2016, and there was even a period when there was no funding for their work. This all contributed to BiH being listed as a Tier 2 "Watch List" country (next to lowest tier) in the State Department's 2019 *Trafficking in Humans Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina*. The *Trafficking in Humans Report* places countries into tiers based on their alignment with standards from the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000) (TVPA). At

the time, there were fears that Bosnia and Herzegovina would be downgraded to Tier 3, which is the lowest tier. These issues were also noted in the recommendations of the European Commission provided in the *2019 Analytical Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union* and the *2018 Report of the EU expert mission on combatting trafficking in human beings*.

It was during this crisis in the functioning of anti-trafficking coordination mechanisms that the development of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH started for the 2020-2023 period. Its main goal was to address a series of key issues and problems in the functioning of the anti-trafficking system in BiH. Among other things, it included the establishment of an effective and efficient coordination mechanism and a more effective and efficient Task Force.

During the process of drafting the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020 - 2023), significant attention was devoted to harmonizing the future coordination mechanism, which involved coordination teams whose structure corresponds to the administrative structure of BiH (state, entities, districts, cantons in FBiH and regions in the RS). The intention was to ensure a more effective and efficient work along with horizontal, and, even more importantly, vertical coordination in the implementation of activities, measures, priorities and goals of the Strategy.

While it was not articulated very clearly, the need for a system for implementing the strategy through action plans was mentioned in Specific Objective 1, along with the need for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and reporting, which would be achieved through the establishment and work of the monitoring team. The Strategy also clearly stated the need to establish multidisciplinary coordination structures at all levels of government, and to strengthen horizontal and vertical coordination. It also recognized the need to ensure stable funding for the implementation of the Strategy and its corresponding action plans, and for ongoing activities in combating human trafficking. The Strategy recognized the need for the systematic collection of well-structured data on: the potential and identified victims of human trafficking, protection measures and direct assistance to victims of human trafficking, reported offenses, investigations, indictments and judgments in human trafficking cases at all levels of government, in accordance with the requirements of the Council of Europe and the European Union. This data collection process which allow for better analyses yielding better inputs for defining preventive and corrective measures and activities in this area. The need for amendments to the criminal law in BiH (at all levels) was clearly articulated, there is a lack of focus on amendments to other laws and regulations in other areas included in the system of combating human trafficking (prevention, protection of victims, compensation, social protection, education, health care, labor, etc.) which somewhat diminishes the relevance of this Specific Objective to an extent.

b) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2 - PREVENTION

Specific Objective 2 is focused on improving the knowledge of professionals and the general public about human trafficking, building mechanisms that will prevent and limit the possibility of human trafficking occurring, creating an environment that fosters socially acceptable behavior and developing sustainable early warning systems for human trafficking cases.

This Specific Objective is very broad and complex and encompasses multiple separate functional units, which complicated the evaluation process.

The 2019 *Trafficking in Humans Report* for Bosnia and Herzegovina of the US State Department, European Commission's 2019 *Analytical Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union* and the 2018 *Report of the EU expert mission on combatting trafficking in human beings* do not specifically mention prevention as one of the areas where the anti-trafficking system is lacking, and the reports provide few recommendations regarding prevention, such as:

- "When it comes to prevention, significant efforts are needed to prevent child trafficking, including social services taking a more proactive role."
- "Integrate Romani groups into decision-making processes regarding victim protection."

Specific Objective 2 concerns a larger areas that goes beyond informing citizens and professionals and includes building mechanisms for preventing human trafficking, creating early warning systems and reinforcing socially acceptable behavior. This is a broader framework than the recommendations from the reports, but competent institutions unequivocally define it as relevant (according to reports of BiH institutions, information collected from representatives of the institutions as part of the evaluation). Prevention is key in the fight against human trafficking and other forms of criminality. All methodological approaches in anti-trafficking are focused on prevention, i.e. creating the conditions for preventing and limiting the possibility of human trafficking occurring, and developing sustainable early warning systems for human trafficking cases. The competent institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina recognized this and incorporated it into Specific Objective 2.

However, the relevance of Specific Objective 2 is diminished because some elements that would have led to achieving the goal were not in focus or were minimized in the action plan and strategic programs, especially in terms of building anti-trafficking mechanisms and sustainable early warning systems.

c) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3 – THE PROSECUTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING CRIMINAL OFFENSES

Analysis of the relevance of Specific Objective 3 - Criminal prosecution of human trafficking offenses "*Improve the detection and prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking and related criminal offenses*" can be completed based on the recommendations of international institutions from 2019.

The recommendations made it clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to take steps to improve its technical and institutional capacities, including: clearly defining the competencies of relevant agencies and establish more effective cooperation; ensuring better training for prosecutors and law enforcement on recognition and prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking; conducting effective financial investigations and working to secure convictions; standardization of evidence collection and evidentiary proceedings in court trials. Recommendations also underlined shortcomings in the investigation and prosecution aimed at victims, insubstantial international cooperation and insufficient efforts aimed at the identification and protection of victims, especially children.

Specific Objective 3 addresses almost all recommendations, and focuses on the detection and prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking and related crimes. The part related to improving the protection of the rights

of victims in criminal proceedings is omitted in the definition of the Specific Objective; however, this is a technical error that was corrected in the Action Plan and strategic programs for improving the protection of victims' rights in criminal proceedings.

d) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4 – THE PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Strategy includes Strategic Objective 4: “Ensuring sustainable programs and procedures for proactive protection and assistance for victims of all forms of human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially for the vulnerable groups.” In order to achieve this goal, the following groups of activities/strategic programs are planned:

- Improve the identification of victims of human trafficking
- Improve general protection and support measures for victims of human trafficking
- Ensure special protection of women who are victims of human trafficking
- Ensure special protection of children who are victims of human trafficking
- Ensure special protection of victims of human trafficking in migration flows through Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Ensure special protection of foreign nationals who are victims of human trafficking

Specific Objective 4 addresses most of the recommendations from the reports of international monitoring mechanisms, primarily the Council of Europe and the US State Department. The recommendations concern the harmonization of indicators for identifying victims of human trafficking. This is crucial for addressing the relatively low victim identification rates in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which do not reflect the true number of trafficked persons. The number of identified victims per year was: 35 in 2015, 48 in 2016, 83 in 2017 and 36 in 2018. Training on the identification of victims for all key actors in the process of identification and assistance for women, children, foreigners and the protection of victims or potential victims in migration flows is also an integral part of the Action Plan and activities related to coordination. Activities in the Action Plan are well suited to address the problem and deliver activities related to the adoption of minimum standards for the protection of victims of human trafficking, which would provide victims with adequate assistance, and information about their rights, institutions and organizations that can help them, etc. The issues of compensating victims of human trafficking, providing free legal aid and funding for NGOs that run safe houses are also addressed well.²

One drawback is the lack of activities related to the self-assessment of victims of human trafficking and activities related to providing information and referrals that come after the self-reporting process, which also entails informing victims about their rights (victim referral process). There are also no activities aimed at raising awareness about human trafficking and the fact that using services provided by trafficking victims is a punishable offense and supports labor exploitation. There are no trainings on victim identification for the business sector. Another key drawback is the lack of a clearly structured institutional response and coordination of activities (horizontal and

vertical) implemented by institutions that can contribute to improving the process of identifying victims of human trafficking. All this needs to also take place on the local level (where processes happen on the ground), i.e. there needs to be a standardized course of action for the identification of victims of human trafficking.

e) *SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 5 - PARTNERSHIP*

The Strategy includes Specific Objective 5: “Improve cooperation between competent institutions and authorized organizations at all levels of government in order to more effectively fight various forms of human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina”

The following groups of activities/strategic programs are planned in order to reach this goal:

- Improve cooperation with the civil society, trade unions, the private sector and the academic community
- Improve international cooperation

Two main groups of activities/strategic programs were designed to achieve this specific goal. The first program focuses on improving cooperation with key civil society actors, trade unions, the private sector and the academic community. This cooperation is intended to strengthen partnership and synergy between state institutions and external actors in order to improve anti-trafficking efforts. Concrete activities and dialogue are intended to create a shared vision for preventing this serious violation of human rights.

The second program is aimed at improving international cooperation, recognizing the importance of synchronized action and sharing information with other countries and international organizations. Through these activities, Bosnia and Herzegovina will create stronger ties with partners in the fight against human trafficking at the global level, and the exchange of experiences and best practices will contribute to a more effective suppression of this criminal offense.

Taking into consideration the proposed strategic programs, Specific Objective 5 is not well articulated, because the definition itself focuses on “cooperation between competent institutions and authorized organizations at all levels of government” without mentioning international cooperation; however, taking into consideration the strategic program definitions, the objective is essentially relevant.

4.2. Evaluation findings on efficiency

The efficiency of the implementation of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) should be monitored based on the number of implemented activities defined in the Action Plan, and the spending of the allocated financial resources for the implementation of the defined activities. This is not possible for this Strategy and its corresponding Action Plan, because allocated funding amounts were not included in the Action Plan itself, which instead listed only potential sources of funding. Exceptions are activities related to financing the work of safe houses, the work of the Strike Group and the commemoration of the World Day against Human

Trafficking, which is financed from the budget of institutions at the BiH level. The efficiency of the implementation of the Strategy is monitored through the annual Report on anti-trafficking and on the implementation of the Strategy for the Suppression of Human Trafficking in BiH (2020-2023), which provided information about 2020 and 2021. Some information about activities in 2022 and 2023 was obtained during the evaluation process through interviews and focus groups. A small proportion of activities in the Action Plan had not been implemented at the time of evaluation, and there was no confirmation that these activities would be successfully completed by the end of 2023.

a) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1 - SUPPORT SYSTEM

Most of the activities in Specific Objective 1 were successfully implemented, with implementation indicators associated with these activities. One general issue in the Action Plan is that indicators were not assigned baseline or target values, so it is difficult to assess whether the activities achieved the expected result. However, the report shows which activities have been fully completed, which are ongoing or have not yet begun.

The activities that have not been implemented are mostly in the Strategic Program 1.7, and related to the alignment of criminal legislation with the recommendations of the Council of Europe and the EU (activities 1.7.2, 1.7.3, 1.7.4. and 1.7.5.).

The Strategic Program 1.5., also includes a failure to provide funding for safe houses for one year, because the budget was not adopted.

b) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2 - PREVENTION

The Strategy implementation report shows that almost all planned activities have been implemented, with the exception of activity 2.3.1. ("Activity 2.3.1. Ensure the prevention of trafficking in human organs through regular tasks and assignments at places intended for crossing the state border, as well as through operational actions in cooperation with domestic and international law enforcement"). The report does not provide sufficient information and the activities lack baseline and target values, which makes it difficult to assess whether expected results were achieved. The elements in the strategic document and the action plan, such as more detailed information on the implemented activities, their results and contribution to the prevention of trafficking through missing indicators (missing baseline and target values of indicators at different levels) and funding amounts associated with the activities, hinder attempts to analyze the efficiency. These shortcomings need to be corrected in the next strategic document.

c) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3 - PROSECUTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING CRIMINAL OFFENSES

Available information about activities related to Specific Objective 3 - Prosecution of Human Trafficking Criminal Offenses shows that 11 out of 20 activities have been implemented (3.1.1., 3.1.3., 3.2.1., 3.2.2., 3.2.3., 3.3.1., 3.4.1.,

3.5.1, 3.6.1., 3.7.1. and 3.7.2.), while other activities are still ongoing and may be completed by the end of the Strategy implementation period.

This indicates that certain aspects of criminal prosecution for human trafficking offenses have been successfully implemented, while some activities are still ongoing and need to be completed. Failure to complete activities may affect the overall efficiency of the implementation of activities under this specific objective, since it would mean that the plan was not followed.

Additional monitoring and implementation of the remaining activities is needed to achieve full efficiency in the implementation of strategic programs and activities defined by the action plan in the area of criminal prosecution for criminal offenses of human trafficking. This situation may indicate the need to find and mobilize additional resources and the need to improve inter-institutional cooperation.

d) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4 - PROTECTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Available information about implemented activities from the Specific Objective 4 - Protection of Human Trafficking Victims shows high implementation rates of planned activities. Out of a total of 38 (thirty-eight) planned activities, 35 (thirty-five) or 92% of the activities were fully implemented. The following two (2) activities were partially implemented: 4.6.6. Sign cooperation agreements on combating human trafficking with the countries of origin of victims of human trafficking and 4.7.1. Form a working group for the development of the draft law for establishing a trafficking victims compensation fund. This group is currently being formed and five meetings were held thus far on this topic. Activity 4.7.2. Drafting of the Law for establishing a trafficking victims compensation fund has not begun. As noted previously, this indicates that most of the activities from Specific Objective 4 - Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking have been implemented.

e) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 5 - PARTNERSHIP

According to the Report on Human Trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2021, significant progress has been made in achieving Specific Goal 5 - Improving cooperation between competent institutions and authorized organizations at all levels of government in order to more effectively combat various forms of human trafficking in the country. Seven of the planned 9 activities were completed (77.77% completion rate).

While completion rates are high, there is still room for improvement. Activity 5.2.2. on participation in international operational actions has been partially implemented, which may indicate the need to strengthen cooperation with other countries and international organizations in the fight against human trafficking. Also, activity 5.2.3. about signing cooperation agreements on combating human trafficking with countries in the region and other interested countries has not even begun, which can make it challenging to forge partnerships at the regional and international level. Overall, the achieved results demonstrate significant effort and commitment to achieving the goals of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings, but also show the need for even more efforts in strengthening cooperation and partnership.

4.3. Evaluation findings on effectiveness

The Action Plan of the Institutions of BiH for the Implementation of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) (Action Plan), addresses Specific Goals from the Strategy and defines strategic programs and corresponding activities. Those activities are in the purview of institutions at the state-level that hold specific competencies within the established anti-trafficking system, while many operational responsibilities are at lower levels of government. Without synchronized activities of all levels of government in BiH (with robust and regulated horizontal and vertical coordination), anti-trafficking efforts will yield results, casting doubt on the effectiveness of the Strategy.

Overall, there are several aspects of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) that reduce its effectiveness, including:

- Deficiencies include the lack of a clearly structured referral mechanism that refers to the necessary legal, regulatory and institutional considerations, the lack of a coordination system (horizontal and vertical), clearly defined tasks, obligations and competencies of relevant bodies.
- Lack of in-depth (vertical) harmonization of laws and regulations of related areas, which should have a role in the system of combating human trafficking (education, health, social protection, etc.).
- The lack of strong commitment of governments to allocate budget funds for activities makes the established system vulnerable
- Weakened focus of action plans (at all levels) on solving real problems, and taking over lower-level activities without tailoring efforts to respond to real needs.
- Due to the lack of institutionalization, some processes (reporting on action plan implementation and entering data into the digital IT statistical portal) at lower levels of government depends on coordinator agility or is negatively impacted by the political landscape (e.g. in RS).
- Research does not result in concrete guidelines for improvements (applied research)
- The efficiency of awareness raising campaigns is undermined by the lack of adequate planning or reporting on the results of campaigns
- Lack of CSO advocacy for institutional and legislative improvements (systemic solutions), with the current focus mostly on interventions
- Lack of alignment with other strategic documents, such as, for instance, the Action plan for Roma and other strategic documents
- Lack of focus on building mechanisms for preventing and limiting the possibility of human trafficking and creating an environment for fostering socially acceptable forms of behavior and developing sustainable early warning systems for human trafficking cases

- Lack of continuity in improving human resources and upgrading technical equipment of police agencies, especially the Border Police (which is chronically understaffed)
- Lack of active involvement of institutions in the protection of victims' rights in criminal proceedings
- Inadequate use of an IT tool called the "Vulnerability Assessment" app - it is necessary to restructure the way the app is used, to better correspond to its purpose and utility.
- Lack of focus on training in victim identification, inadequate training target groups and training participants, questionable expertise of lecturers, lack of training offered by competent institutions whose scope of work includes providing training.
- Lack of focus on victim identification processes at the local level, through local institutions and bodies such as Mobile Identification Teams (which were formed in some local units of self-government).
- Lack of productive cooperation with the academic community on introducing appropriate curricula
- Lack of results of international cooperation in terms of signing agreements with other countries (in the region and beyond)

a) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE I - SUPPORT SYSTEM

After the Strategy was adopted, the next step was the **adoption of action plans for the implementation of the Strategy**. The coordination teams developed and proposed, and the Council of Ministers and governments of entities, cantons and Brčko District adopted Action Plans for the implementation of the Strategy to Suppress Human Trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020-2023 (each government developed an action plan for their level). The system where the strategic document is defined at the state level, and the related action plans are defined at all levels of government (state, entities, district, cantons), is a good example of defining a common strategic platform and separate implementation plans responsive to the specific needs of different level of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Action plans at different levels of government closely follow the format of the Action Plan of BiH institutions, which indicates that the processes were coordinated well. One key shortcoming in the strategic document and accompanying action plan is the lack of a standardized format:

- The strategic platform lacks the typical structure: general objective, specific objective, priorities, measures
- Indicators are not provided for specific levels of goals, priorities, and measures in the strategic platform
- The indicators in action plans do not include baseline and target values
- Amounts of funding were not defined for most activities, while the majority of sources involve donors. This means that there is no clear ownership of the processes and results of the Strategy implementation.

Most strategic programs include some activities that can be considered part of the regular scope of work of employees in institutions, and are not primarily focused on contributing to the establishment of a functional and sustainable support system in the prevention, suppression and prosecution of human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Action plans of lower levels of government followed a similar pattern, with minor modifications in terms of adding some activities related to the specific competences of lower levels of government. This lack of focus on solving real issues and problems in the competence of lower levels of government is seen as one of the key shortcomings.

Therefore, although the competent institutions adopted Action Plans, the effectiveness of those plans is diminished due to this lack of focus on solving real problems at those levels of government.

With the support of international partners, **a methodology was developed for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the entire Strategy, through monitoring the implementation of individual action plans.** This methodology was translated **into a digital mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and action plans** used by the coordinators for combating human trafficking (at all levels of government in BiH), except for the coordinators of the Republika Srpska, which results in unnecessary complications in the process of monitoring and reporting. The proclaimed fear of representatives of RS of getting involved in transferring competences affects efforts to establish an anti-trafficking system. This is used to justify their lack of cooperation when it comes to submitting information through this portal. However, such fears have no basis in fact since entering data about the implementation of activities from a public document (Action Plan) does not involve transferring competences but simply facilitates information sharing among different organizations in BiH. RS representatives also complain about one-way communication between representatives of state and entity institutions, stating that this affects many aspects of cooperation. In the case of anti-trafficking efforts specifically, two-way communication is facilitated through regular meetings of coordinators (from all levels of government in BiH), and the participation of representatives of institutions in the work of the Task Force. However, these complaints also warrant further inspection.

Although all coordinators (except the coordinator from the RS) enter data into the digital mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and action plans, and although all coordination teams were formed by competent institutions (at all levels in BiH), their tasks are not defined with enough precision, and neither is their obligation to coordinate activities both horizontally and vertically. The referral mechanism for combating human trafficking is not clearly structured nor does it refer to the necessary legal, regulatory and institutional considerations. Accordingly, there are no official guidelines at the state level regarding the obligation to use a digital mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and action plans, and data entry depends either on the political situation, or on how dedicated and informed individual coordinators are.

The methodology for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the entire Strategy was developed (by international partners), along with a digital mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy. The efficiency is not optimal, and the key reasons for this is the lack of a coherent structure, which would include references to the necessary legal, regulatory and institutional mechanisms. Therefore, there are no officially agreed-on state-level guidelines on the mandatory use of the digital mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and the corresponding

action plans. Data entry depends either on the political situation, or on how dedicated and informed individual coordinators are. Despite these circumstances, the State Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings regularly prepares annual reports on the situation in the field of human trafficking and the implementation of the Strategy, which also takes into account the reports of coordinators at lower levels of government.

Coordination teams have been established at all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH, BDBiH, FBiH, RS, 10 cantons in FBiH, 6 regional teams in RS) and they coordinate the fight against human trafficking in their purview. *The lack of a clear structure and the lack of references to the legal, regulatory and institutional framework in the referral mechanism at the BiH level caused problems in the implementation of institutional activities at all levels of government, which in turn diminishes effectiveness.*

Problems in the functioning of coordination teams include:

- funding of the work of coordination team members is not uniform, both at different levels of government and within the teams. Some coordination teams do not receive honorariums, while in other situations, individual team members receive additional compensation for working in the coordination team, while others do not (because their institution either lacks the funding or is unwilling to introduce this honorarium). This has a demotivating effect on members of the coordination team, and the practice should be uniform throughout BiH.
- some coordinating team members are inactive and fail to attend the meetings (this makes it hard to achieve a quorum). This most often happens at lower levels of government in BiH.
- the structure of the coordination teams is not uniform because members include representatives of different institutions from a certain level of government. Some coordination teams include representatives of the non-governmental, while others do not.

Although all coordination teams have been established, there is a problem that affects effectiveness. It stems from the fact that the referral mechanism for the fight against human trafficking in BiH is not clearly structured and embedded in a robust legal, regulatory and institutional framework at the BiH level. Although all coordination teams were formed by competent institutions (at all levels in BiH), their tasks are not defined with enough precision, and neither was their obligation to coordinate both horizontally and vertically. The differences in financial compensations for the work of coordination team members across different levels of government is another demotivating factor. Nevertheless, the state coordinator regularly holds meetings with coordinators, representatives of institutions, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations, which are used to discuss topics important for the functioning of the system for combating human trafficking in BiH, as well as topics related to the implementation of the Strategy and its corresponding action plans.

The most important research conducted during the implementation of the Strategy included research on Preventing and fighting human trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation, and research conducted by non-governmental organizations on the topic of human trafficking with a special focus on the treatment of victims in the legal and institutional framework, public awareness of human trafficking, assessment of child safeguarding mechanisms, begging and attitudes about begging, and the forms of human trafficking in Roma communities. The effectiveness

of the research completed so far is unquestionable in terms of presenting information and trends and building the capacity of representatives of institutions, and the results can certainly be used to build a more effective and efficient anti-trafficking system. However, the application of the results of such research is still not visible in terms of activities that would address the key problems defined in the research in a systematic (institutional) way (adopted guidelines, regulations, amendments to laws and regulations facilitating a more effective fight against trafficking, adequate application of existing laws and regulations, etc.).

Although a substantial amount of research has been conducted, and the effectiveness of the research completed so far is unquestionable in terms of presenting information and trends and building the capacity of representatives of institutions, the application of the results of such research is still not visible in terms of activities that would address the key problems defined in the research in a systematic (institutional) way (adopted guidelines, regulations, amendments to laws and regulations facilitating a more effective fight against trafficking, adequate application of existing laws and regulations, etc.). This research, and other research, that should be done before starting the drafting process for the new strategic document and corresponding action plans, should focus on an in-depth analysis of the problems hindering the functioning of the anti-trafficking system, strengthening institutional coordination (horizontal and vertical), creating harmonized institutional guidelines for different aspects of anti-trafficking in BiH (for all levels), amending laws and regulations relevant to anti-trafficking efforts at all levels of BiH (health, education, social protection, etc.).

Funding for the implementation of the Strategy comes exclusively from international donors, while the budget of BiH provides funding for safe houses (130,000 BAM annually), celebrating World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (October 18) (10,000 BAM annually) and the work of the Task Force (80,000 BAM annually). Many of the activities from the Action Plan should be part of the institutions' and employees' regular scope of activities. The Action Plan includes a strategic program called "Secure funding for the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan", which is unusual, since this activity should be included in the implementer's core functions.

Funds for the implementation of the Strategy are provided mainly by international organizations, and to a limited extent by the country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Funding for safe houses for one year is the exception (problems in the process of adoption the BiH budget). The structure of the funding raises questions about the ownership of the process, Strategy, action plans, etc. All this diminishes the efficiency of activities aimed at achieving Specific Objective 1: "Organize a functional and sustainable support system for preventing, suppressing and prosecution of human trafficking offenses in BiH..."

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported the development of the **methodology for collecting statistical data on human trafficking, including victims and perpetrators of criminal acts of human trafficking** in accordance with the standards of the European Union. This was followed by the **development of the information system - statistical portal for the collection and analysis of statistical data on human trafficking** which was used for the first time for the preparation of the Report on Trafficking in Human Beings for 2021. The information system is used to collect statistical data on human trafficking, including data on victims and perpetrators of the criminal offense of human trafficking, in accordance with the European Union and Eurostat standards. The information system - statistical portal, together with a digital mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and its corresponding action plans, and a digital tool for reviewing

the activities of international organizations and the non-governmental sector, comprise an advanced integral tool with a lot of utilities that are already being used by the Ministry of Security of BiH, the state coordinator, coordinators at lower levels of government, non-governmental organizations and international organizations (international partners). Coordinators from RS are not entering their data, which negatively impacts the effectiveness of many aspects of combating trafficking in humans.

The methodology for collecting statistical data on human trafficking and the information system - statistical portal available to coordinators are functional greatly contribute to achieving results within Specific Objective 1, as well as the general objective of the Strategy. Effectiveness is not optimal, with some of the key reasons being the lack of a clear structure and the lack of references to the legal, regulatory and institutional framework in the referral mechanism. Therefore, there are no officially agreed-on state-level guidelines on the mandatory use of the information system - statistical portal. Data entry depends either on the political situation, or on how dedicated and informed individual coordinators are. Despite these circumstances, the State Coordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings regularly prepares annual reports on the situation in the field of human trafficking and the implementation of the Strategy, which also takes into account the information entered by coordinators in the information system - statistical portal.

When it comes to the strategic program related to **aligning criminal legislation with the recommendations of the EU and the Council of Europe**, the efficiency is diminished by several factors. Only one activity from the Action Plan regarding harmonization of legislation has been completed (and it can be considered an integral part of the second activity, step one) In the report of the state coordinator, it is stated that the Ministry of Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated the process of signing the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs by sending a request for the opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is no further information in the reports on efforts related to this convention. There are no reports about other activities defined within the strategic program, which indicates that the activities were not implemented. The definition of activities within this Strategic Program completely ignores the need for institutional strengthening; clearly defining the obligation of horizontal and vertical coordination of established bodies and institutions in the Referral Mechanism; clear structuring of the referral mechanism; harmonization of laws at all levels of BiH that would make the system sustainable; harmonization and adoption of common guidelines (regulations) that would be applied in various aspects of the fight against human trafficking on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc. Due to the aforementioned issues, the impact of this strategic program on the effectiveness of Specific Objective 1 is negative.

The very definitions of activities in this Strategic Program preclude the activities from being entirely effective, even if they were implemented completely. Therefore, the impact of this strategic program on the effectiveness of Specific Objective 1 is negative.

b) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2 - PREVENTION

Evaluation findings on effectiveness of Specific Objective 2 were reached by answering the following questions:

- I. To what extent are the selected strategic programs and activities effective? Do the results of those pro-

grams and activities contribute to addressing the real needs of citizens and professionals when it comes to understanding issues related to human trafficking?

2. Was Specific Objective 2 aimed at the appropriate target groups, such as Roma communities, youth and persons at risk of human trafficking, professionals, labor inspectors and diplomacy officers?

The activities implemented within Specific Objective 2 were intended to improve the knowledge of professionals and the general public about human trafficking, build mechanisms that will prevent and limit the possibility of human trafficking occurring, create an environment that fosters socially acceptable behavior and develop sustainable early warning systems for human trafficking cases.

The description of activities carried out within the framework of strategic programs shows that organizations and institutions made a significant effort to raise awareness of human trafficking, identify potential victims and provide support to risk groups. However, they did not build mechanisms to prevent and limit the risk of trafficking or foster an environment of reinforcing socially acceptable forms of behavior and developing sustainable early warning systems. All this diminishes the efficiency of Specific Objective 2.

Anti-trafficking awareness raising campaigns: *The projects and activities implemented, including training sessions, workshops, street actions, public debates and social media campaigns, have the potential to contribute to increasing public awareness of the problem of human trafficking.* Citizens can use various media and channels to find information about the risks of human trafficking, how to recognize it, what to do if they suspect trafficking and where to find support. The development of the Strategy and the definitions of strategic programs and activities within the Action Plan were not based on a survey examining the attitudes of citizens/professionals about the problem of human trafficking and gauging how informed they are about the issues. Therefore, there is no baseline to which to compare the current situation. This evaluation included an online pilot survey conducted to examine the attitudes of citizens on a sample of 398 respondents from across BiH (Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 of this report). The results of the survey indicate a further need for campaigns on preventive action, and the need for better approach to planning campaigns, target groups, media channels, implementation, increasing reach and impacts. The findings of the survey indicate that:³

- Around 33.2 % said that they are informed about ways they can recognize human trafficking, 39.4% said that they are not aware of this information, while 27.4% were unable to tell whether they would be able to recognize trafficking (the assumption is that they would not).
- About a third of the respondents stated that they are aware of organizations that provide assistance to victims of human trafficking, while the remainder of respondents are not aware of these organizations.
- The majority of respondents reported that they use Facebook (74.1%) and Instagram (73.1%), followed by YouTube (45%) and Tik Tok (31.4%). Less than 15% of respondents use other social media sites. This information can be important for planning future social media campaigns.
- About 91.7% of respondents believe that the largest proportion of social media users (including institu-

³ The digital survey was conducted as part of the evaluation of the Strategy. There was a total of 398 respondents from BiH (of varying age and genders, and from various parts of the country).

tions and organizations that actively work to combat human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina) are not sufficiently active on social media in terms of raising awareness about human trafficking, while only 8.3% of respondents believe that are very active or active.

- The majority of respondents, about 83.2%, are not aware of campaigns aimed at raising awareness about human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the future, it is necessary to invest more effort into determining the appropriate types of campaigns, goals, target population, scope, implementation methodology, performance monitoring, etc.
- A large majority of respondents, about 73.6%, did not recognize a single organization that is active on social media and/or conducting campaigns raising awareness about human trafficking. This should be taken into account when thinking about transparency, citizen participation, and two-way communication between the public and participants in the anti-trafficking system.

The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data indicates the reduced effectiveness of the implementation of Specific Objective 2.

Celebrating relevant international days: Celebrating the European Union Anti-Trafficking Day and the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons provides an opportunity to intensifying the focus on the problem of human trafficking and promote preventive measures. The Ministry of Security and NGOs use these days as an opportunity to raise awareness about human trafficking, share information about different types of trafficking and promote prevention. Non-governmental organizations did not advocate for creating a more robust legislative framework and policies for building a mechanism to prevent and limit the possibility of human trafficking (e.g. amending the law that treats forced marriage, employment of potential victims of human trafficking, access to education, education for children staying in safe houses, access to medical care, etc.). Very few activities were aimed at creating an environment that fosters socially acceptable forms of behavior (such as the development of curricula for high schools, establishment of legal clinics at law faculties, initiating cooperation with police academies and the Agency for Education and Professional Training of Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.) and developing sustainable early warning systems, which diminishes the effectiveness of this strategic program.

Specific Objective 2 must be inclusive of different target groups that are at higher risk of human trafficking. It is not clear from the available reports and interviews whether all groups were targeted by the implemented activities. There is also no record of analyses of social factors that play a role in human trafficking, and analyses of types of individuals, jobs and occupations at heightened risk of trafficking (e.g. agricultural work, shepherding, work in spa centers, etc.), which reduces the effectiveness of this objective.

Implementation of social, economic and other measures for at-risk groups: Within this program, various economic empowerment activities were implemented in Roma communities. IOM and GIZ conducted trainings for the identification of victims of human trafficking among the Roma population, while GIZ provided support to Roma women through the social enterprise “Agroplan”. Organizations such as Medica Zenica, Bolja budućnost and others also implemented projects aimed at providing support to at-risk groups, such as women, children, victims of violence and the unemployed. This indicates that the organizations focused on identification and economic support for members of the Roma community, and neglected advocacy for harmonizing this strate-

gic program with strategic documents in other areas, such as, for instance, Action Plan for Roma and others. This harmonization would have had a systematic and institutional impact on improving the social and economic position of the Roma, and failure to achieve it has decreased the effectiveness of this program.

Mechanisms for informing workers: The activities in this strategic program are designed to provide information to workers and raise awareness about the risks of human trafficking, recognizing signs, and prevention. Activities included organizing events, public forums, street actions, producing brochures and other activities, which put a spotlight on the problem of trafficking and raised awareness among members of the public, institutions and organizations. This demonstrates that organizations and institutions invested substantial efforts into raising public awareness of the risks related to labor exploitation. The effectiveness of this program was reduced by insufficient involvement of all target groups (e.g. BiH consular staff, labor inspectors and other professionals who deal with this problem). Not enough effort was invested into building mechanisms that will prevent and limit the possibility of human trafficking occurring, create an environment that fosters socially acceptable behavior and develop sustainable early warning systems for human trafficking cases. This diminishes the effectiveness of Specific Objective 2.

c) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3 - PROSECUTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING CRIMINAL OFFENSES

Efficiency analysis of implemented strategic programs and activities in Specific Objective 3 - Criminal prosecution in the fight against human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina reveals the following:

- A network of specialized prosecutors and investigators to combat human trafficking was established through the strategic program "Intensify criminal prosecutions of perpetrators of human trafficking offences". The network held three meetings, but due to the lack of participation of representatives from Republika Srpska the network was shut down, which diminished the efficiency of activities in Specific Objective 3. According to specialist investigators, the formation of this type of network should also be accompanied by an internal reorganization of police administrations and prosecutor's offices at lower levels, where the relevant jobs and job descriptions have not been defined, and the tasks of investigating human trafficking are added to the existing tasks of investigators and prosecutors. For this reason, the established system (TCMS) does not recognize specialized prosecutors as competent for human trafficking prosecution (at lower levels, especially in FBiH).
- Based on the data on activities implemented under the Strategic Program 3.2. which delegated building capacities of law enforcement agencies, prosecutor's offices and courts for efficient prosecution of perpetrators, it can be said that the goal of improving the prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking offenses by increasing the number of law enforcement officers and supplying more material and technical resources has been partially met. There is a pronounced need for increasing staffing levels at all police agencies, and especially in the Border Police, where there is a chronic shortage of personnel due to difficulties related to public calls for job applications. There is currently a shortage of about 250 border police officers. It can be concluded that the results of the implementation of this Strategic Program reduce of the effectiveness of Specific Objective 2.

- Strategic Programs 3.3., 3.4., 3.5., and 3.6., include the adoption of the Trafficking Prosecution Protocol. The Protocol was adopted while this evaluation was being conducted, which makes it hard to assess whether it improved the anti-trafficking system in terms of non-punishment of victims of human trafficking, criminal prosecution of persons using the services of victims of human trafficking, criminal prosecution of legal entities involved in human trafficking and increase proportion of compensations awarded to victims of human trafficking. In any case, the Protocol set the institutional foundation needed to improve the aforementioned processes. Trainings are yet to begin, but prosecutors and judges are expected to be trained on the application of the Protocol by the end of 2023. While the effects of these activities cannot be assessed yet, it is evident that the implemented strategic programs have a positive impact on the efficiency of Specific Objective 3.
- Protection of the rights of victims in criminal proceedings, activities undertaken to implement this strategic program, such as providing legal aid and support to victims of human trafficking in exercising their right to compensation for non-pecuniary damages indicate limited progress in improving the protection of victims' rights in criminal proceedings and contribute to the efficiency of this specific goal. Stronger institutionalization is needed, along with continued activities in the NGO sector.
- The level of coordination of activities related to the criminal prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking has improved to an extent. The Task Force should play a key role in the coordination process, but in order for the Force Group to work at full capacity, its permanent members must have passed security checks (which is not the case now), so that they can participate in the exchange of information related to investigations and help direct investigations (these investigations are confidential) that are marked "confidential". Non-permanent members such as representatives of civil society organizations and others could be involved in the work of the Task Force when needed (occasionally, by invitation).
- Analyses of available verdicts do not show any significant progress when it comes to confiscating assets obtained through human trafficking, which further diminishes the efficiency of strategic program 3.9.

d) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4 - PROTECTION OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

The analysis of the effectiveness of the activities carried out under Specific Objective 4 - Protection of victims of human trafficking involved an analysis of all strategic programs, reports and activities undertaken by relevant institutions and organizations. Relevant information was also collected in a series of interviews with key stakeholders, such as coordinators, international organizations and non-governmental organizations whose work pertains to the area covered by Specific Objective 4, and, finally, through a survey of public opinions (Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 of this report). The following was determined:

Through Strategic Program 4.1. Improve the identification of victims of human trafficking:

- a list of indicators for vulnerable groups and forms of human trafficking was created and an IT tool was developed - mobile application called "Vulnerability Assessment". Although the app was presented at a series of trainings, the interviewed respondents were not clear on who it is intended for - professionals or

the general population. The respondents, who are professionals, do not use it in the field. The only metric of its use is the number of downloads. The application's usefulness is limited to an electronic reminder or as a brochure of indicators, for educational purposes. There is a lot of room for improvement in terms of its interactivity and more widespread use for raising public awareness. Results of an online survey conducted in July 2023 on 398 respondents confirms the need to inform/educate the public about indicators for identifying victims of human trafficking: "Do you have access to information on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking?", 39.4% said that they did not have access to such information, 27.4% were unsure (the assumption is that they do not have access), and only 33.2% of the respondents said that they have information on how to recognize human trafficking.

- A series of trainings were delivered during the implementation of the strategy, funded by various international organizations. The modules were not designed according to the recommendations of the MARRI Committee from October 2021. The expertise of some of the trainers was inadequate and caused complaints from participants about the quality of the training. Most of the trainings planned in the strategy have been implemented. However, the trainings are sometimes repeatedly attended by the same group of people (who even attend the same module several times), while individuals who work directly with trafficking victims are underrepresented at these trainings.
- The statistical portal revealed that the trainings for law enforcement on reducing stereotypes and stigmatization of women victims of trafficking (sexually exploited women) were not held. Trainings for professionals on identifying and helping child victims (especially relevant actors who work proactively on identifying child victims, and are particularly focused on children living and working on the street). Trainings for professionals on cultural diversity were planned to be delivered by trainers/officials, but were not conducted during the implementation period of the 2020-2023 Strategy.
- In most cases, international organizations organized the trainings independently or in coordination with the state coordinator, while very few of them worked with official training centers such as: CEST - Centers for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training of FBiH and RS, AEPTM - Agency for Education and Professional Training, entity police academies, in accordance with the needs of law enforcement agencies and other services and agencies that are competent for providing training.

Through Strategic Program 4.2. Improve general protection and assistance measures for victims of human trafficking:

- In the course of the Strategy implementation, minimum standards for the protection of trafficking victims were adopted so all victims would receive individualized support, be informed about their rights and institutions and organizations they can turn to immediately upon identification, SOP (standard operating procedures), and adopted guidelines for protecting the privacy of trafficking victims. Since not much time has passed from the adoption of the guidelines, their effectiveness cannot be assessed, but they are certain to contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the Strategy.
- The protocol for prevention and handling of cases involving child exploitation was developed in 2021, with input from professionals from 3 cantons: Sarajevo, Canton 10 and West Herzegovina Canton. Over

the course of three years, the protocol has been signed by 30 units of local self-government and cantons: The protocol is binding and is based on existing legislation, but it is not applied on the territory of Republika Srpska, which they justify by stating that this activity is not defined in the action plan of RS. Only Prijedor stated that they need a protocol developed. The purpose of the protocol is to build a system and strengthen the cooperation of all key actors at the entity, cantonal or local community level on processes involved in protecting children from any type of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.

- Mobile Identification Teams (MITs) were also created in response to the low number of identified victims of human trafficking. The introduction of MITs is related to efforts to fulfill the obligations from the action plan at lower levels, and, more importantly, to enable efficient and proactive identification of victims of human trafficking and facilitate coordination at the local government level. They are also intended to enable the inclusion of representatives of the Roma community in the processes of providing assistance to trafficking victims. They are usually established by the mayor, and funding varies, depending on the local unit of self-government or donor funds. MITs work closely with the Coordinator of the Coordination Team. MIT membership: Center for Social Work, Police Administration and NGOs with representatives of the Roma population in the sector of combating human trafficking.

Strategic Programs 4.3., 4.4., 4.5. and 4.6. should definitely be redefined and simplified in the next strategy, while Strategic Program 4.7. contains activities that have not been initiated or have started very recently. This indicates that it is necessary to continue searching for an institutional and political solution related to the establishment of a compensation fund for trafficking victims.

e) *SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 5 - PARTNERSHIP*

Community policing and partnership promotion takes place through regular meetings with MIT members. Regular coordination meetings also contribute to this process since the coordinators of the coordination teams are employees of the Ministry of Interior. The statistical portal of the Ministry of Security of BiH for entering data needed to coordinate the implementation of activities and monitoring the Strategy is a useful tool for monitoring the implementation but is used only in FBiH and BDBiH. Cooperation with the academic community is not strong and there are no noticeable effects on the ground due to funding problems related to developing and introducing new curricula. When it comes to accessing Europol and Interpol tools, coordinators reported that there are no problems when it comes to sharing or receiving information, which is done by submitting a request for information. So far, no evident progress has been made in cooperation agreements on anti-trafficking with countries in the region and other interested parties. Horizontal and vertical coordination needs to be improved because it remains hindered by the problem in communication between the RS entity and FBiH and BDBiH regarding individual cases of human trafficking. This causes serious complications during investigations. All of the issues described above diminish the effectiveness of the implementation of activities under Specific Objective 5.

4.4. Evaluation findings on sustainability

Sustainability of the results achieved by the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) will be observed from the aspect of political and institutional sustainability and then from the aspect of financial sustainability. The evaluation will also include the durability of positive changes and effects.

Overall, there are several aspects of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) that reduce its sustainability, including:

- Lack of in-depth (vertical) harmonization of laws and regulations of related areas, which should have a role in the system of combating human trafficking (education, health, social protection, etc.).
- The lack of a clearly defined and structured, legally and institutionally regulated referral mechanism, compounded by the lack of a system for horizontal and vertical coordination, clearly and precisely defined tasks, obligations and competences of relevant bodies,
- Inconsistency in rules governing work (at different levels of government) and different treatments of honorariums across coordination teams;
- The lack of strong commitment of governments to allocate budget funds for activities makes the established system vulnerable
- Relatively low participation of institutions, organizations and professionals working on the ground, from various fields, in the planning and implementation of prevention activities (and awareness raising campaigns), and a heavy reliance on the non-governmental sector in these processes.
- Civil society organizations focus on intervention support for members of the Roma community, and there is very little advocacy for amendments to laws and regulations, or the improvement and harmonization of this strategic program with other strategic documents such as the Action plan for Roma, for instance
- Chronic understaffing in law enforcement agencies and the high turnover of staff (both within the agency and from one agency or institution to another).
- The lack of systemic institutional training activities for judges and prosecutors through the Centers for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training, which would allow the adopted guidelines (of the HJPC) to truly contribute to improving of proceedings in cases of human trafficking.
- Lack of adequate and continuous institutional support for victims, that would allow them access to adequate legal aid during the entire criminal proceeding. Lack of institutionalization when it comes to providing free legal aid (relying exclusively on CSO-led activities).
- The lack of institutionalization of very important local working bodies like MIT, which also entails a lack of financial sustainability of such bodies.
- Lack of institutionalization of trainings related to the protection of victims of human trafficking.

- International organizations taking initiative to fill the gap caused by the inertia of domestic institutions (at different levels of government) can lead to unsustainable processes and results. This issue should be taken into account in the future.

a) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1 - SUPPORT SYSTEM

Through Specific Objective 1, activities were carried out in several strategic programs. This included a web portal, which is managed by the Ministry of Security of BiH and includes a digital mechanism for monitoring and following the implementation of the Strategy and action plans; an information system - statistical portal for collecting and analyzing statistical data on human trafficking; platform for entering data from partner NGOs and international organizations regarding training. Based on the available information, it appears that the portal is used by all coordinators and active NGOs and international organizations with the exception of the coordinator from Republika Srpska, who does not enter data into the portal. Lack of rules clearly specifying the obligation to enter data into the system, and an incomplete definition of the legal status of relevant institutions and bodies (coordination teams, task forces, etc.), which are active participants in the system of combating human trafficking in BiH, especially in terms of vertical and horizontal coordination of activities. These are significant threats to the sustainability of the achieved results.

It is obvious that the funding for this Strategy is almost entirely left to international organizations, with the exception of safe houses, the Task Force and the celebration of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, which does not contribute to sustainability. This raises questions about ownership of the strategic document, and causes financial uncertainty because international partners may change their funding priorities away from these issues. A much more sustainable option would be securing public funding for activities.

The issue of the sustainability of work outputs of coordination teams was mentioned in several reports, noting that some coordination teams are essentially volunteers, which others are compensated, which causes some members to lose motivation to participate in coordination teams. There were also instances where coordination team meetings did not reach a quorum. Unequal treatment of coordination team members in terms of compensations is a threat to sustainability.

Sustainability of the entire system is undermined by the process of harmonizing laws and regulations that does not treat anti-trafficking in BiH as an interconnected system that would benefit from amendments to laws and regulations at all levels of government - not only of criminal law, but also other laws and regulations related to anti-trafficking (health, education, social protection, reintegration into society, etc.).

b) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2 - PREVENTION

This aspect of the evaluation analyzes the extent to which the achieved results of the activities from Specific Objective 2 are sustainable and whether they can persist after the end of the implementation of the Strategy. This also entails an assessment of how the results of activities under Specific Objective 2 can be made sustainable. Below is an account of some problems that have been observed and can negatively affect the sustainability and durability of the achieved results.

Analysis of the report shows that efforts have been made under Specific Objective 2 to raise citizens' awareness of human trafficking. Organizations and institutions conducted various campaigns and educational activities to inform the public about human trafficking and ways to address this problem, and a web platform was created for guiding users through the process of creating awareness-raising campaigns. The campaigns were geared at different target groups, including women, children, youth and vulnerable groups, such as the Roma. It is very important to ensure that professionals from different sectors who work on the ground (institutions) are actively involved in the planning and implementation of prevention activities. Their involvement will lead to greater impact and sustainability of results. A high level of participation of institutions and organizations at all levels of government is necessary.

Under Strategic Program 2.2, efforts have been made to improve the situation for risk groups, especially for Roma women, support the employment of Roma women in social enterprises, provide psychosocial and economic support for vulnerable affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Civil society organizations focus on intervention support for members of the Roma community, and there is very little advocacy for amendments to laws and regulations, or the improvement and harmonization of this strategic program with other strategic documents such as the Action Plan for Roma and others. This harmonization would have had a systematic and institutional impact on improving the social and economic position of the Roma, and would have been substantially more sustainable. Laws and strategic documents that do not correspond to the needs can be a significant obstacle to achieving the sustainability of the results.

Under Strategic Program 2.4., a mechanism was established to inform workers about legal and safe mechanisms for working abroad and getting help via a telephone number that offers potential economic migrants information about their rights and options. However, this activity is not conducted in cooperation with the competent BiH Labor and Employment Agency, Border Police and consular workers, which significantly reduces the sustainability of the results of this strategic program.

Activities under the Strategic Program 2.5. are aimed at preventing child trafficking and supporting vulnerable children in order to protect their rights and reduce the risk of child trafficking. The sustainability of the results of this program is increased by activities such as training for education professionals on the proactive identification of child victims of human trafficking, and the initiative to establish a shelter for children without adequate parental care who are at risk of becoming victims of criminal offenses.

c) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3 - PROSECUTION FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING CRIMINAL OFFENSES

The evaluation of the sustainability of activities carried out within Specific Objective 3 - Prosecution of human trafficking criminal offenses in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed the following:

Specialized network of prosecutors and investigators: The sustainability of this network is low due to the lack of institutionalization related to the work of this working body (and similar ones), as well as their dependence on the current political situation or on individuals, etc. One example of this is the lack of participation of representatives from Republika Srpska, which caused the group to shut down. This shows the need for better coordination and stronger engagement of all levels of government in order to ensure continuous support and participation in the

fight against human trafficking, and a more robust incorporation of this process into the established system of anti-trafficking action.

The lack of personnel in law enforcement agencies and administrations, especially in the Border Police, is a serious challenge and is detrimental to the sustainability of the established elements of the system of combating human trafficking. The high turnover of professional staff is also hindering sustainability. The sustainability of the results of the activities conducted by these institutions requires continuous investment in human resources and equipment to ensure efficient investigations and prosecutions.

Although the Guidelines were adopted by the HJPC (and as such are sustainable as a result of the direct implementation of the Strategy), the achievement and sustainability of the results of these guidelines depends on how efficiently they are applied in real situations. It is therefore necessary to ensure continuous training through the Centers for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training so that the guidelines can substantively contribute to the improvement of proceedings in human trafficking cases.

Providing legal aid and support to victims of human trafficking in exercising their right to compensation for non-pecuniary damages can be considered limited progress in improving the protection of victims' rights. The sustainability of this program requires continuous institutional support for victims and ensuring that they have access to adequate legal aid throughout the entire criminal proceeding process.

d) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4 - PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

The mobile application "Vulnerability assessment" owned by the Ministry of Security of BiH needs to be improved to ensure sustainability. International organizations are willing to finance the improvement of the application during the implementation of the next strategy.

Trainings are the responsibility of the Ministry of Security of BiH. Various international organizations are involved in the design and implementation of trainings, and the selection of lecturers; however, it is necessary to focus more on the involvement of the Centers for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training, AEPTM and other institutions competent for training personnel who would work on adopting the curriculum and certifying lecturers and modules, in order to construct an institutionalized and systematic training process. Since all training courses and sessions are financed by international donors, improving the sustainability of training services will entail reducing the dependence on donor funds.

The signatories are responsible for all signed protocols and standards, and their implementation and sustainability. Minimum standards have been adopted, and the signatories bear responsibility for sustainability and implementation of these documents.

The institutional sustainability of MIT depends on the members of those teams. Financial sustainability is uncertain due to unequal funding across different teams. A combination of public funding and donor funds is usually how these activities are financed.

Legal aid for trafficking victims cannot be sustainable unless there is a clear institutional definition of free legal aid, which would entail training the providers of free legal aid, certification of providers and their financing.

e) *SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 5 - PARTNERSHIP*

The key problem for sustainability in this segment is the chronic lack of institutionalization of processes, although these processes do take place with the support of international organizations. This is precisely why there is a lack of responsiveness at certain levels of government involved in the joint process of fighting human trafficking (one example is Republika Srpska and the lack of cooperation with the institutions of FBiH and BDBiH when it comes to investigations and sharing information). This is also the reason behind the lack of cohesion in the structure and working methods of the bodies established to combat human trafficking at different levels of government in BiH, which also harms sustainability. CSOs and international organizations taking initiative to fill the gap left by the lack of institutional action at various levels (e.g trainings that are not conducted by competent institutions, etc.) can create unsustainable processes and results.

5. EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Conclusions on relevance

The Overall Objective defined in the Strategy is: "To ensure a continuous, comprehensive and sustainable response of society to trafficking in human beings through an enhanced system of prevention, prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking criminal offences, protection and assistance to victims of trafficking, especially vulnerable groups, by means of functional integration and capacity building of all relevant institutions and organizations."

Conclusion - Relevance of the Overall Objective: The overall objective and specific objectives defined in the strategy are relevant and mostly aligned with the needs and key issues in the field of combating human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both the overall and specific objectives defined in the Strategy have been assessed as relevant for the future as well. However, but some strategic programs and activities need to be restructured and new ones need to be added that respond to real needs on the ground. Although significant progress has been made when it comes to the establishment and functioning of the anti-trafficking system, the Overall Objective: "*Ensure a continuous, comprehensive and sustainable response of society to trafficking in human beings through enhanced system of prevention, prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking crime offences, protection and assistance to victims of trafficking, especially vulnerable groups, by means of functional integration and capacity building of all relevant institutions and organizations.*" is still relevant, and will continue to be so. However, the focus of some of the Specific Objectives needs to be improved with more precise definitions, the vertical logic of the Strategy and the Action Plan should be taken into account, and suitable strategic programs and activities need to be defined, which will adequately address the real (crucial) problems faced by actors involved in the system of combating human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Taking all the aforementioned into account, it can be concluded that the Overall Objective of this strategy is highly relevant and addresses key issues in the functioning of the anti-trafficking system in BiH, as noted in 2019.

Conclusion - Relevance of Specific Objective 1: Specific Objective 1 of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020 – 2023) is entirely (highly) relevant. Achieving Specific Objective 1 creates the conditions for the sustainable functioning of the support system for the prevention, suppression and prosecution of human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, addressing pressing issues noted in the reports of relevant international organizations, such as the need to improve legal and institutional frameworks and coordination; capacity building; securing funding and continuously monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Strategy. Relevance was partly diminished by the lack of activities aimed at amending legislation in other areas included in the system of combating human trafficking (prevention, protection of victims, compensation, social protection, education, health care, labor, etc.), which should be addressed in the next planning period. This Specific Objective should be emphasized in the next planning period as well, while the strategic programs from the action plan should focus more on addressing the shortcomings in the functioning of the established anti-trafficking, includ-

ing the functioning of established bodies, their competences and obligations, vertical and horizontal coordination, status and operations, legal and institutional framework, etc.

Conclusion – Relevance of Specific Objective 2: Specific Objective 2 is moderately to highly relevant considering the relatively low level of understanding and awareness of the public and professionals about the problem of human trafficking. This was confirmed by a survey conducted as part of the evaluation, and it is reasonable to assume that this level was even lower in the past. During the development of the Strategy, there were no effective mechanisms for preventing and limiting the possibility of human trafficking and for fostering an environment that encourages socially acceptable forms of behavior (or there were limited activities). Therefore, this part of Specific Objective 2 is highly relevant. Early warning systems to quickly identify human trafficking offenses either did not exist or were ineffective, which makes this part of Specific Objective 2 highly relevant. Overall relevance is reduced because the strategic programs defined in the Action Plan did not focus on certain aspects of Specific Objective 2 (such as constructing an early warning system, establishing effective mechanisms to prevent human trafficking, or creating an environment that reinforces socially acceptable behavior). Bearing in mind the purpose of this goal, and the fact that this problem is still relevant, we can conclude that continuing to focus on this goal in the future is reasonable and justified.

Conclusion – Relevance of Specific Objective 3: Specific Objective 3 reflects the importance of improving technical and institutional aspects of the prosecution of human trafficking offenses. Considering the deficiencies identified in this area, **Specific Objective 3 is entirely (highly) relevant** because it focuses on the measures needed to build capacities, harmonize procedures and improve cooperation in order to ensure the efficiency of criminal prosecution and the protection of the rights of victims of human trafficking.

Conclusion - Relevance of Specific Objective 4: Although all activities involving the training of institutions and professionals related to victim identification are included through various strategic programs, reports by relevant international institutions indicate the need for significant improvement in this area, both in 2019 and at present, which makes this specific goal highly relevant. Its relevance is partly diminished by the lack of strategic programs and activities related to the self-assessment of victims of human trafficking and activities related to providing information and referrals that come after the self-reporting process, which also entails informing victims about their rights and referring them to all actions that follow after self-reporting and their rights (victim referral process). There are also no activities aimed at raising awareness about human trafficking and the fact that using services provided by trafficking victims is a punishable offense and supports labor exploitation. There are no trainings on victim identification for the business sector. Another key drawback is the lack of activities aimed at designing a clearly structured institutional response and coordination of activities (horizontal and vertical) implemented by institutions that can contribute to improving the process of identifying victims of human trafficking i.e. there is no standardized course of action for identifying and supporting victims of human trafficking, which diminishes relevance. Considering the compliance of Specific Objective 4 with the recommendations of relevant international institutions, **it can be concluded that Specific Objective 4 – Protection of victims of human trafficking is moderately to highly relevant for combating human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina.**

Conclusion - Relevance of Specific Objective 5: Effective cooperation and mutual support between competent institutions and authorized organizations are key to implementing the Strategy in the fight against human

trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Joint efforts and coordination will put the country in a better position to protect victims, identify traffickers and implement effective measures to prevent and combat human trafficking. Activities were designed promoting partnership with law enforcement, holding regular coordination meetings of competent institutions and international organizations, introducing modern information technologies and social media to facilitate the exchange of information between competent institutions, CSOs and international organizations and, finally, strengthening cooperation with the academic community. Other activities were focused on international cooperation through establishing international law enforcement and prosecutorial cooperation through Interpol, Europol, SELEC, etc., and other activities related to participating in international operative actions and sharing information. Taking into account the proposed strategic programs, it can be concluded that Specific Objective 2 is not defined well. Its definition includes “cooperation between competent institutions and authorized organizations at all levels of government”, but makes no reference to international cooperation. However, considering the definitions of strategic programs, this objective is relevant. Considering the compliance of Specific Objective 5 with the recommendations of relevant international institutions, **it can be concluded that Specific Objective 5 – Partnership is highly relevant for combating human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina.**

5.2. Conclusions on efficiency

Conclusion - efficiency of Strategy implementation: Taking into account the circumstances in which the Strategy and the Action Plan were created and implemented, the political instability in BiH which inevitably affects the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan, available human resources, as well as the scarcity of budget funds allocated for the implementation of activities, it can be concluded that most activities were successfully implemented **and that the implementation efficiency of the Strategy (Action Plan) is moderate to high.** When developing future strategic documents and corresponding action plans, it is important to use a format that allows for clearer definitions of the indicators and that follows the standardized structure that includes an overall objective, specific objectives, priorities, measures, programs/projects, and clear indicator values (baseline and target values) for different levels of indicators. It is also important to associate allocated funding amounts with individual activities, which is currently done only for a few activities that are financed through public budgets. The funding situation described above may indicate the need to secure additional funding sources and improve cooperation between institutions in the process of implementing activities related to criminal prosecution and other anti-trafficking areas. These considerations need to be taken into account when planning the next strategic document.

Conclusion - Implementation efficiency of Specific Objective 1: The activities that have not been implemented are mostly in the Strategic Program 1.7, and related to the alignment of criminal legislation with the recommendations of the Council of Europe and the EU (activities 1.7.2, 1.7.3, 1.7.4. and 1.7.5.). The Strategic Program 1.5., also includes a failure to provide funding for safe houses for one year, because the budget was not adopted. Taking into account the circumstances in which the Strategy and Action Plan were developed and implemented, it can be concluded that most of the activities were successfully implemented **and that the efficiency of the implementation of Specific Objective 1 is moderate to high.**

Conclusion - Implementation efficiency of Specific Objective 2: The efficiency of the implementation of Specific Objective 2 is assessed as high in terms of implemented activities, although activity 2.3.1. was not implemented. A complete evaluation of the efficiency of Specific Objective 2 requires more detailed information about the activities carried out, their results and their contribution to the prevention of trafficking through missing indicators (missing baseline and target values of indicators at different levels) and missing funding amounts of planned and implemented activities. However, the Strategy and Action Plan do not contain indicators defined in accordance with the strategic planning methodology, and most activities are not associated with implementation costs, which makes it impossible to determine the actual efficiency (it is assumed that it could be lower). This issue needs to be resolved in the process of drafting the next strategic document.

Conclusion - Implementation efficiency of Specific Objective 3: Overall, the effectiveness of activities implemented under Specific Objective 3 is currently low to moderate, but there is potential for improvement after the completion of the remaining 9 (nine) activities (3.3.2., 3.4.2., 3.5.2., 3.6.2., 3.8.1, 3.8.2, 3.8.3, 3.9.1 and 3.9.2) which may be finished by the end of the implementation period. For a comprehensive evaluation of the efficiency of Specific Objective 3, more detailed information is needed about the activities carried out, their results and their contribution to the prevention of trafficking. This information would be provided by the missing indicators (missing baseline and target values of indicators at different levels) and missing costs of planned and implemented activities. However, the Strategy and Action Plan do not contain indicators defined in accordance with the strategic planning methodology, and most activities are not associated with implementation costs, which makes it impossible to determine the actual efficiency (it is assumed that it could be lower). This issue needs to be resolved in the process of drafting the next strategic document. The situation described above may indicate the need to secure additional sources and improve cooperation between institutions in the process of implementing activities related to criminal prosecution. These considerations need to be taken into account when planning the next strategic document.

Conclusion - Implementation efficiency of Specific Objective 4: Overall, the efficiency of the implementation of Specific Objective 4 is high. Out of 38 activities that were planned, 35 were completed, and two activities were partially completed. Those activities are 4.6.6. Sign cooperation agreements on the fight against human trafficking with the countries of origin of victims of human trafficking and 4.7.1. Form a working group for the development of the draft for establishing a trafficking victims compensation funds. This group is currently being formed and five meetings were held thus far on this topic. Activity 4.7.2. Drafting of the Law for establishing a trafficking victims compensation fund has not begun.

Conclusion - Implementation efficiency of Specific Objective 5: Seven of the planned nine activities were implemented in this Specific Objective. Activity 5.2.2., which relates to participation in international operational actions has been partially realized, which may indicate the need to strengthen cooperation with other countries and international organizations in the fight against human trafficking. Also, activity 5.2.3., which relates to concluding cooperation agreements on cooperation in the fight against human trafficking with countries in the region and other interested countries has not even begun, which can be a challenge for forging partnerships at the regional and international level. Overall, the achieved results demonstrate significant effort and commitment to achieving the goals of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings, but also show the need for even more

efforts in strengthening cooperation and partnership. The overall efficiency of the implementation of Specific Objective 5 can be considered moderate to high.

5.3. Conclusions on efficiency

Conclusion - Effectiveness of Strategy implementation - The effects of individual Strategic Programs indicate that the lack of a clearly structured referral mechanism for the fight against human trafficking (which is neither precisely defined nor institutionalized or regulated), causes a reduction in the effectiveness of most of the measures and activities undertaken. Very poor efficiency was noted in the harmonization of the provisions of criminal legislation with the recommendations of the EU and the Council of Europe. Activities lack focus on crucial harmonization of legislation across different levels of BiH and across areas related to the fight against human trafficking (health, social protection, compensation for victims, etc.), which are needed for the system to be functional. Furthermore, the lack of public funding for Strategic Programs, and relying almost exclusively on international organizations for funding, does not contribute to the effective implementation of the Strategy. Public awareness was raised through numerous activities of institutions and civil society organizations, but the results of those campaigns in certain segments were assessed as relatively low, pointing to the need to improve the planning and implementation of campaigns and analyze the achieved results/effects of such campaigns. Strategic programs related to prevention were not aimed at building mechanisms for preventing human trafficking, involving all relevant target groups in activities, and promoting socially acceptable behavior and early warning systems (not defined with enough precision). The focus in future planning processes should be on these issues. The formation of unsustainable anti-trafficking bodies, a large number of working bodies at different levels of government, without clear tasks and competences (such as the network of specialized prosecutors and investigators) also diminished effectiveness. The lack of institutionalization can negatively impact the work of those bodies (whose work will then depend on the political situation, the commitment of individuals, etc.). On the other hand, the Trafficking Prosecution Protocol adopted by the HJPC (4 Protocols), are a step in the right direction, and greatly contribute to effectiveness. The Task Force membership structure needs to be changed to ensure that permanent members are individuals who have passed security checks, and as such could participate in the exchange of information and directing investigations that are marked “confidential”. This would allow for the activities of the Task Force to be more clear and concrete, with better effectiveness. The institutionalization of the process of education and training of institutions/professionals in the anti-trafficking system, at all levels of government, would also contribute to the improving effectiveness. The contribution of the establishment and strengthening of international moderate effectiveness is evident and should be continued.

Nevertheless, taking into account the baseline situation (from 2019) and the political conditions in which the Strategy was created and implemented, significant progress has been made, **it can be concluded that the effectiveness of the Strategy was moderate.**

Conclusion - Efficiency of Specific Objective 1: Effectiveness in achieving Specific Objective 1 is moderate. Some of the activities contributed to the overall increased effectiveness, while some had a negative

impact on the effectiveness. The structure of the developed action plans and the lack of well-designed indicators that would enable monitoring of the situation regarding human trafficking in BiH do not contribute to the effectiveness in achieving Specific Objective 1. Evaluation of the effects of individual Strategic Programs within Specific Objective 1, shows that the absence of a clear structure and the lack of references to the legal, regulatory and institutional framework in the referral mechanism reduced the effectiveness of most of the measures and activities undertaken. This problem particularly affected the use of a digital mechanism for monitoring implementation Strategies and action plans, and data entry into the established information system - statistical portal, and to a lesser extent the work of coordination teams. Very poor efficiency was noted in the harmonization of the provisions of criminal legislation with the recommendations of the EU and the Council of Europe. Activities lack focus on crucial harmonization of legislation across different levels of BiH and across areas related to the fight against human trafficking (health, social protection, compensation for victims, etc.), which are needed for the system to be functional. Relevant activities that were defined in the Action Plan were not implemented completely. Furthermore, the lack of public funding for Strategic Programs, and relying almost exclusively on international organizations for funding, does not contribute to the effective implementation of Specific Objective 1, and may even jeopardize the achievement of the Overall Objective of the Strategy. The effectiveness of the research completed so far is unquestionable in terms of presenting information and trends and building the capacity of representatives of institutions. However, the application of the results of such research is still not visible in terms of activities that would address the key problems defined in the research in a systematic (institutional) way (adopted guidelines, regulations, amendments to laws and regulations facilitating a more effective fight against trafficking, adequate application of existing laws and regulations, etc.). **Nevertheless, taking into account the baseline situation (from 2019) and the political conditions in which the Strategy was created and implemented, significant progress has been made, and it can be concluded that the Specific Objective 1 was achieved with moderate effectiveness.** Future efforts need to be aimed at systematically eliminating all the deficiencies and defining more effective strategic programs and activities that will address the existing problems in the anti-trafficking system.

Conclusion - Efficiency of Specific Objective 2: According to the information provided, although organizations and institutions have invested efforts in raising the awareness of citizens and professionals about human trafficking, and in providing support to risk groups, **effectiveness in achieving Specific Objective 2 is low to diminished** due to the documented limited impact of those campaigns on the population in BiH (the quality of the campaigns and reporting on the results/effects of the campaigns are lacking) and the lack of results in building mechanisms to prevent and limit the possibility of human trafficking. Furthermore, the strategic programs were not aimed at all relevant target groups, which also reduced the effectiveness, and in certain situations problems were compounded by a language barrier for certain target groups. The lack of involvement of all relevant target groups can lead to missing important information and opportunities to prevent human trafficking. Fostering an environment for strengthening socially acceptable behavior and developing sustainable early warning systems about cases of human trafficking were not emphasized enough in the activities that were carried out, which also reduced the effectiveness of the goal.

Increasing the effectiveness of Specific Objective 2 requires a stronger focus on building mechanisms to prevent human trafficking, include all relevant target groups in the activities, and intensify the promotion of socially accept-

able behavior and early warning systems. Campaigns should be high-quality and planned and implemented in a professional manner, and the reports should include an analysis of the campaigns' impact. Considering the changes in the external environment regarding new ways of recruiting and exploiting victims, this strategic goal should be supplemented by activities and measures that are responsive to the new circumstances and can help in identifying new ways that victims are being recruited and exploited. This primarily concerns the use of information technology in committing trafficking offences.

Conclusion - Efficiency of Specific Objective 3: Although there is some progress and efforts to combat human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is still room for improvement. **Overall, the efficiency of the implemented activities from Specific Objective 3 is currently low to moderate, but there is a possibility this may improve after the completion of the remaining 9 (nine) activities (3.3.2., 3.4.2., 3.5.2., 3.6.2., 3.8.1, 3.8.2, 3.8.3, 3.9.1 and 3.9.2) by the end of 2023.**

The established network of specialized prosecutors and investigators for combating human trafficking did not have the necessary support from representatives from the RS, and was therefore disbanded. This network needs to be supported by all actors in BiH in order to ensure its sustainability and efficiency. It is also necessary to work on improving the internal organization of police administrations and prosecutor's offices at lower levels of governments (especially in FBiH). There need to be job positions and related job descriptions focused exclusively on anti-trafficking (like at the state level). Doing so will allow for the implementation of legal provisions on assigning cases through the electronic system (TCMS), and law enforcement officers will know who is the competent prosecutor for human trafficking cases.

Work must continue on building the capacity of relevant institutions and professionals, primarily law enforcement, border police, and investigators, in order to increase the efficiency of investigations and prosecution of perpetrators, but also to address the high turnover of professionals (due to transfers from one workplace to another within the same institution, or transfers from one institution to another). These institutions must have a sufficient number of trained and specialized employees focused on anti-trafficking, to ensure adequate detection and prosecution of trafficking cases.

The efficiency of criminal prosecution is also measured through court proceedings and sentencing. The fact that the HJPC adopted guidelines for trafficking cases (Trafficking Prosecution Protocol - non-punishment of victims of human trafficking, Trafficking Prosecution Protocol - criminal prosecution for using the services of victims of human trafficking, Trafficking Prosecution Protocol - compensation for non-pecuniary damages to victims of human trafficking) is a step forward, but the implementation of these documents and training for prosecutors and judges on how to apply the protocol have not begun. These guidelines are part of institutional efforts and as such have a positive impact on efficiency, which should become noticeable in the field soon. Courts must ensure fair and efficient proceedings and proper sentencing of perpetrators of human trafficking in order to ensure deterrence and provide justice for victims. These guidelines should contribute to this goal, and trainings should be followed-up by monitoring of the implementation of guidelines.

The coordination of activities related to the prosecution of perpetrators of human trafficking has been improved, but the Task Force can work at full capacity only if permanent members of the Task Force have passed security

checks, and as such could participate in the exchange of information on investigations that are marked “confidential”. This would allow for the activities of the Task Force to be more clear and concrete.

It is also necessary to further improve institutional cooperation within BiH. Efficient fight against human trafficking requires strong intersectoral cooperation among different institutions, such as prosecutor's offices, law enforcement, social work centers, health institutions, but also other relevant civil society organizations, along with international cooperation with relevant institutions/organizations such as Europol, Interpol, Frontex and others. This coordination is crucial for the exchange of information and evidence, which facilitates investigations and the prosecution of perpetrators.

In order to increase the efficiency of criminal prosecution, capacity building and training for key actors should be provided continuously. Departments in charge of training within the relevant institutions should analyze their employees' needs for training and education on an annual basis. Training and education should be carried out by competent institutions such as the Agency for Education and Professional Training, entity Police Academies and entity Centers for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training. The training should also include the sharing of best practices from other countries that have had success in the fight against human trafficking. Such an institutional approach would significantly improve the effectiveness of Specific Objective 3.

Conclusion - Efficiency of Specific Objective 4: The efficiency of Specific Objective 4 can be rated as moderate. The key deficiencies that diminish the effectiveness are related to the appropriateness and usability of the vulnerability assessment application, the lack of an institutional approach in the design and implementation of training, which is also reflected in the quality of training, the absence of elements that ensure adequate protection of victims, such as access to education for children in safe houses, lack of emergency accommodation (72 hours), the lack of official procedures for overseeing the operation of safe houses (in terms of the adequacy of the protection provided to victims), inadequate provision of legal aid by competent institutions, and the lack of rigorous structuring, standardization and strict institutional monitoring of the activities of all actors. Intensive work is needed to address these deficiencies and improve the effectiveness of the implementation of Specific Objective 4.

Conclusion - Efficiency of Specific Objective 5: Although some results have been achieved in strengthening the partnership between institutions in BiH and actors in the anti-trafficking system in BiH (cooperation of institutions at different levels, cooperation of institutions with CSOs, international organizations, etc.), and at the international level (sharing data, Europol, etc.). Although coordination meetings are held regularly, as are the meetings of the state coordinator with representatives of the CSO and international partners, there are important segments of the partnership still missing. This primarily refers to cooperation with the academic community on the introduction of adequate curricula, strengthening the cooperation of FBiH, RS and Brčko District in conducting investigations and sharing information, addressing the lack of cooperation on the part of the RS, and the absence of a module for interactive communication between coordinators (which could be included as a separate module within the Ministry's statistical portal for entering data for coordinating the implementation of activities and monitoring the Strategy). Bilateral cooperation with other countries (in the region and beyond) did not result in the signing of bilateral agreements, which also needs to be rectified, while cooperation with Europol and Interpol is satisfactory in terms of information sharing. **Taking into account all the above, the efficiency of Specific Objective 5 is moderate.**

5.4. Conclusions on sustainability

Conclusion: Sustainability of the results of the Strategy: The most significant elements that diminish the sustainability of the Strategy and represent a threat to the sustainability of the significant positive changes resulting from the implementation of this Strategy are:

- Lack of in-depth (vertical) harmonization of laws and regulations of related areas, which should have a role in the system of combating human trafficking (education, health, social protection, etc.).
- Lack of focus on changing the legal and regulatory framework. Laws that do not correspond to the needs can be a significant obstacle.
- The lack of a clearly defined and structured, legally and institutionally regulated referral mechanism, compounded by the lack of a system for horizontal and vertical coordination, clearly and precisely defined tasks, obligations and competences of relevant bodies,
- Inconsistency in rules governing work (at different levels of government) and different treatments of honorariums across coordination teams,
- The lack of a strong commitment from governments to allocate budget funds for activities makes the established system vulnerable
- A large number of working bodies at all levels of government (whose work cannot be considered fully institutionalized, or fully regulated, and depends on the political situation, and dedication of individuals, etc.).
- The provision of legal assistance and support to victims of human trafficking in exercising their right to compensation for non-pecuniary damages and the protection of victims of human trafficking, are still not fully defined, regulated and overseen by competent institutions, which should take on a more significant role and discharge their duties.
- The low level of involvement of professionals from different sectors in the planning and implementation of activities is a potential risk that should be addressed by improving two-way communication.
- International organizations taking initiative to fill the gap caused by the inertia of domestic institutions (at different levels of government) can lead to unsustainable processes and results. This issue should be taken into account in the future.

This is precisely why the sustainability of the Strategy is assessed as moderate. These problems need to be addressed adequately in the next planning process. Overall, the sustainability of the results of the activities carried out can be improved by continuous engagement, coordination and institutional support, stronger institutionalization and clear regulation of the processes in the anti-trafficking system, in order to ensure a long-term and effective fight against human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Conclusion - Sustainability of the results of Specific Objective 1: The sustainability of the results achieved through interventions defined in the Action Plan is moderate. Although many anti-traffick-

ing bodies have been established and are functional, and have been appointed by competent institutions at all levels of government, the following issues remain: lack of a clearly defined, legally and institutionally regulated Referral Mechanism, a system for horizontal and vertical coordination, clearly and precisely defined tasks, obligations and competences of the formed bodies, the lack of unified rules governing the work of these bodies (vertical) including unequal honorariums for coordination team members, the lack of strong commitment of governments to allocate budget funds for activities. These issues make the established system vulnerable and dependent on the expertise and dedication of individuals. This diminishes the sustainability of the impressive results, which are very impressive, given the circumstances in which the Strategy was implemented.

During the development of the Strategy, the implementer relied only on the financial resources of international organizations that may not be available in the future, jeopardizing the sustainability of the achieved results. That is why it is necessary to identify potential sources of funding in the budget of BiH and lower levels of government in order to maintain the continuity of support.

The sustainability of the results achieved under Specific Objective 2 is moderate, but all the issues that diminish sustainability must be urgently addressed and should be a priority in the next planning period.

Conclusion - Sustainability of the results of Specific Objective 2: The sustainability of the results achieved under Specific Objective 2 is moderate. The relatively low level of involvement of professionals (from institutions and organizations) from different sectors in the planning and implementation of prevention activities gives rise to a potential risk that the achieved results will not be maintained after the end of the project. It is necessary to ensure that professionals who work in the field are actively involved in planning and implementation in order to boost sustainability. There was very little advocacy for changes to laws and regulations that would contribute to the sustainability of the results achieved. Laws that do not correspond to the needs can be a significant obstacle.

In the light of these conclusions, it would be advisable to intensify efforts to secure sustainable sources of funding (public budgets), strengthen cooperation with professionals who work in the field (from institutions and organizations) from different sectors, and actively advocate for changes in the legislative and regulatory framework to improve the sustainability of the results achieved in the fight against human trafficking.

Conclusion - Sustainability of the results of Specific Objective 3 Overall, the sustainability of the implemented activities within Specific Objective 3 is moderate. The low sustainability of the establishment and operation of the Specialized Network of Prosecutors and Investigators indicates the need for better coordination and engagement of all levels of government in order to ensure continuous support and stronger engagement in the fight against human trafficking. It also shows the need for a stronger institutional approach (as opposed to empaneling different ad hoc working bodies whose work is not fully regulated, depends on the political situation, individuals' willingness to participate, etc.). The lack of personnel in law enforcement agencies and administrations, especially in the Border Police, is a serious challenge that limits the sustainability of the results of implemented strategic programs. The sustainability of the activities conducted by these institutions requires continuous investment in human resources and equipment to ensure efficient investigations and prosecutions. Although the Trafficking Prosecution Protocol was adopted by the HJPC (and as such is sustainable as a result of the

direct implementation of the Strategy), the achievement and sustainability of the results of the Protocol depends on how efficiently it is applied in real situations. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure continuous training through the Centers for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training so the guidelines can substantively contribute to the improvement of proceedings in human trafficking cases. The sustainability of the results of activities focused on providing legal assistance and support to victims of human trafficking in exercising their right to compensation for non-pecuniary damages requires continuous institutional support to victims, while ensuring that they have access to adequate legal assistance during the entire criminal proceeding.

Overall, the sustainability of the implemented activities can be improved by continuous engagement, coordination and institutional support, more robust institutionalization and clear regulation of the processes in the anti-trafficking system, in order to ensure a long-term and effective fight against human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Conclusion - Sustainability of the results of Specific Objective 4: The overall sustainability of the results achieved under Specific Objective 4 is moderate. Results owned by institutions (clearly defined ownership of a specific institution) generally have a high degree of sustainability, although there are also cases where sustainability is doubtful. For certain results, sustainability needs to be improved, for instance the “Vulnerability Assessment” app and training delivery. The Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina has the mandate to deliver trainings, and institutions such as CEST, AEPTM and other institutions in charge of personnel training should be involved in the design and implementation of training courses, adoption of the curriculum, the certification of lecturers and modules by competent authorities, in order to establish an institutionalized and systematic approach to conducting training. It is important to work on increasing the institutional and financial sustainability of working bodies as well as the MIT. Also, processes such as providing free legal aid need to be institutionalized as much as possible.

Conclusion - Sustainability of the results of Specific Objective 5: The key problem for sustainability in this segment is the chronic lack of institutionalization of processes, even though they do take place with the support of international organizations. This is precisely why there is a lack of responsiveness at certain levels of government involved in the joint process of fighting human trafficking (one example is Republika Srpska and the lack of cooperation with the institutions of FBiH and BDBiH when it comes to investigations and sharing information). This is also the reason behind the lack of cohesion in the structure and working methods of the bodies established to combat human trafficking at different levels of government in BiH, which also harms sustainability. CSOs and international organizations taking initiative to fill the gap left by the lack of institutional action at various levels (e.g. trainings that are not conducted by competent institutions, etc.) can create unsustainable processes and results. **These are the reasons why the overall sustainability of the results of Specific Objective 5 was assessed as moderate.**

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations are informed by conclusions of the evaluation of the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH (2020-2023) and refer to the improvements that should be applied in the development of the next strategic document. Some recommendations refer to improving the structure and quality of the document itself.

No.	Recommendation
	<p>When preparing the strategic document and the accompanying action plan, it is necessary to adopt a standardized and generally accepted methodology in BiH, which entails:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic planning in the EU planning time frame (seven-year period), with the current seven-year period being 2021-2027. Since the Strategy to Suppress Trafficking in Human Beings in BiH was drawn up for the 2020-2023 period, the next one should be developed for the 2024 - 2027 period, in accordance with the EU time frame. • Structuring the strategic document and action plan in such a way that the vertical layout of the document is clear, which means that in addition to the Overall Objective and Specific Objectives, the strategic platform should also include Priorities and Measures, followed by an Action Plan with programs and activities (or just activities for each measure). • Overall and specific goals, measures, programs and projects should include indicators (impact indicators, outcome indicators, indicators for results of the measures and output indicators for strategic projects). Indicators should have clearly defined baselines and target values. • The Results-Based Management System (RBMS) is recommended for developing the monitoring and evaluation plan for the strategy, because it will allow for more efficient monitoring of implementation and evaluation of progress. • Ensure that strategic programs and activities (measures, programs/projects) have allocated funding sums (related to implementation costs).
	<p>Specific objectives should be more precisely defined and focused, the vertical structure of the Strategy and the Action Plan should also be taken into account, and appropriate strategic programs and activities should be defined to thoroughly address the real problems faced by the actors involved in the functioning of the anti-trafficking system in BiH. In the process of drafting a strategic document, use on the open method of coordination, principles of partnership, inclusion of vulnerable groups, horizontal and vertical coordination, and alignment with strategic documents at the EU level.</p>

	<p>Specific Objective 1 requires more intensive work on improving the legal and institutional framework and coordination; capacity building; securing the necessary financial resources and conducting continuous monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy. The current lack of harmonization of legal regulations with related areas in the anti-trafficking ecosystem (prevention, protection of victims, compensation, social protection, education, health care, work, etc.) should certainly be a priority in the next planning period. This Specific Objective should be emphasized in the next planning period as well, while the strategic programs from the action plan should focus more on addressing the shortcomings in the functioning of the established anti-trafficking, clearly defining the synchronization of activities, including the functioning of established bodies, vertical and horizontal coordination, status and operation of bodies, institutional framework, precise structuring and regulation of the Referral Mechanism for combatting human trafficking, etc.</p>
	<p>Address the lack of public funding for key programs in the Strategy, because the failure to budget for Strategic Programs and relying almost exclusively on financing from international organizations and donors does not make for an effective implementation of the Strategy. The state and institutions at all levels should take over a significant part of funding for the implementation of the Strategy, and include implementation activities in their three-year work plans, annual work plans, projected budgets and annual budgets. Co-funding by international organizations and donors is still desirable in the implementation of certain programs and activities.</p>
	<p>Ensure and fully regulate (at all levels) the monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy and corresponding action plans through the use of a digital mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and data entry into the established information system - statistical portal.</p> <p>If necessary, the digital mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and the information system - statistical portal, should be adapted to fit the structure of the Strategy and provide the necessary information for reporting, and ensure that all levels of government use these digital systems consistently.</p>
	<p>It is necessary to conduct more applied research, which means that the applied results of such research should be visible in the field in the form of activities targeting the key problems defined in the research in a systematic (institutional) way (adopted guidelines, regulations, amendments to laws and regulations facilitating a more effective fight against trafficking, adequate application of existing laws and regulations, etc.).</p>
	<p>The process of drafting a new strategy should begin with a full assessment of the functioning of the anti-trafficking system from the legal, regulatory and institutional aspects, the quality of the vertical synchronization and coordination of institutions, established bodies, and other actors. This process will uncover problems in the functioning of the system and the actors within.</p>

	Ensure that the process of defining the strategy and action plans is highly transparent and involves key actors and representatives of civil society organizations, citizens, representatives of the Roma population and survivors of human trafficking. Apply the Open Method of Coordination (intensive two-way horizontal and vertical coordination) to ensure a cohesive interaction of the Strategy and its corresponding Action Plans at lower levels of government, which will then ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of the Strategy. Indicators for monitoring the implementation of plans at lower levels should be taken from the Strategy at the state level, and potentially expanded with new indicators specific to relevant levels of government.
	Ensure greater sustainability of achieved results by focusing primarily on systemic (institutional) solutions.
	Expand awareness raising campaigns on human trafficking to reach different target groups, including children, parents, teachers, pedagogues, social workers, state institutions, the civil society and the general public. Training should be tailored to each target group in order to increase their awareness of risks, and allow them to recognize signs of human trafficking and methods of protection.
	Ensure that professionals from the social protection sector receive official status
	Conduct awareness-raising campaigns aimed at citizens and professionals from various sectors about the harms of begging, forced and early marriages, and the fact that such behaviors are not a cultural phenomenon inherent in the Roma community but a criminal offense as defined by the Criminal Code.
	Include local and regional Roma leaders in efforts to target Roma communities with awareness-raising campaigns, informing them that certain behaviors (begging, forced and early marriages) are criminal offenses and not tradition.
	In order to improve the efficiency of the strategic program dealing with the support for at-risk groups, especially Roma communities, organizations should work on harmonizing the Anti-Trafficking Strategy with other relevant policies and action plans, such as the Action Plan for Roma and other relevant documents related to social inclusion, education, health care, employment and human rights, which can contribute to the improvement of the socio-economic position of Roma groups and other at-risk groups.
	Build a sustainable system of protection and support for victims by improving the Law on Social Protection so that the victims of human trafficking are recognized in the law and are given the status of beneficiaries of social measures and services. Define a set of social measures and services suitable for victims of human trafficking, that support reintegration into society.
	Ensure fair working conditions for all employees, regardless of their nationality or origin, by introducing effective and comprehensive labor inspections through regular inspections of employers who employ foreign workers in order to verify whether employers comply with legal regulations regarding the employment of foreigners (whether they follow the legal provisions regarding working hours, wages, leave and other rights guaranteed by law) in order to prevent abuse and exploitation of the workforce.

	Establish a fund for compensation of non-pecuniary damages to victims of human trafficking, which will be available to all victims of human trafficking regardless of their residence or citizenship status.
	Strengthen civil society organizations that provide free legal aid to victims (regardless of their residence or citizenship status) and assistance in the process of submitting compensation claims.
	Effective protection against the criminal acts of international human trafficking requires the alignment of laws and regulations of BiH with the EU acquis.
	It is necessary to thoroughly revise the existing legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to more clearly recognize parents as perpetrators of the criminal offense of human trafficking (in situations where children enter into underage marriages, especially in cases of arranged marriages, and exploitation of children for begging), and in order to ensure adequate protection of children who are victims or potential victims of human trafficking in accordance with the Palermo Protocol. The first step in this direction is to improve the legal definition of human trafficking to include a clear definition of situations in which parents or guardians can be held criminally responsible for child trafficking.
	Align the provisions of the Criminal Code of the FBiH and BD BiH with the Council of Europe's Lanzarote Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. (Bosnia and Herzegovina ratified the aforementioned conventions in 2013). Alignment of the term "child" with the Lanzarote Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse A clear definition of the term "child" in legislation enables adequate application of the law and protection of minors from all forms of abuse, including trafficking.
	Organize specialized training and workshops that will be tailored to the needs of judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officers and investigators, and delivered by competent institutions (Agency for Education and Professional Training, entity Police Academies and entity Centers for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training) taking into account their specific roles and tasks in the fight against human trafficking. Training should be provided continuously and regularly updated to keep up with changes in the field of anti-trafficking and new methods used by human traffickers.
	Harmonize the provisions of the Family Law of FBiH, RS, BD BiH in terms of marriageable age: the recommendation is to increase the minimum marriage age to 18 in all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, without exceptions.
	Establish and maintain cooperation with educational institutions (faculties of law, faculties of criminal science) which could lead to establishing professional training programs for their students (Legal Clinic for Combating Human Trafficking) who want to specialize in anti-trafficking. This would ensure a continuous influx of qualified professionals. Legal clinics are special programs that allow students of law and criminal studies to gain practical experience in working on legal issues in real cases.

	In order to strengthen legal support for victims of human trafficking and improve the fight against human trafficking, it is necessary to establish cooperation with bar associations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through organizing educational seminars, workshops and trainings for lawyers specializing in human rights and criminal law, in order to familiarize them with the peculiarities and challenges of the process of providing legal support to victims of human trafficking. These trainings should also include international standards for victim protection, and familiarization with amendments and supplements to laws, and procedures in this area.
	Training and certification of court interpreters for the Romani language is necessary for ensuring efficient investigations and improving access to justice for all citizens, regardless of their linguistic or cultural identity.
	It is necessary to invest in supplying materials and technical equipment for institutions participating in anti-trafficking efforts. Providing institutions with relevant resources, technology and tools can significantly enhance their ability to deal with the challenges of human trafficking and provide adequate support to victims.
	In order to ensure adequate protection and support for victims, it is necessary to adopt laws and regulations that are aligned with international standards and conventions, and that will clearly regulate the establishment of safe houses, define their role, the criteria they must meet in order to receive accreditation and legal recognition by the competent institutions, their scope of work, the rights of victims that are housed there, the rights and obligations of the safe house staff. The law should also define the mechanisms for funding safe houses in order to ensure regular and adequate financing for these institutions. This includes defining the source of funding, the criteria for the allocation of funds, and processes ensuring transparency and responsibility in spending. Legislation must include the standards that safe houses have to meet in order to receive accreditation and support. These standards should include aspects such as housing conditions, security, availability of experts and social workers, psychological support, medical care, access to justice and legal services, education, etc.
	Establish a register of safe houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and adopt a rulebook on the registry structure and management.
	Establish a mechanism for monitoring support for child victims of human trafficking during their stay in safe houses, to ensure they receive the necessary services (education, health care, legal advice, repatriation, reintegration). This should include a mechanism for reporting on the services provided.
	Establish reception points at the cantonal level as quick temporary solutions for accommodating children who are potential victims of human trafficking.
	Standardize the membership structure of coordination teams and other working bodies that were formed at different levels of government.
	Create training modules based on the recommendations of the MARRI Committee. Set up a lecturer certification system by either create a new system or using authorized certification companies.

	The Ministry of BiH should continuously monitor and coordinate the delivery of training during the implementation of the next Strategy in cooperation with competent institutions such as CEST, AEP-MT, the Training Department of the Ministry of Interior, Civil Service Agency and the like, as well as international and local organizations, and assume the role of supervising the delivery of trainings
	Ensure that training participants do not attend the same trainings multiple times and that operatives who work directly in the field with trafficking victims also attend trainings.
	Create a model that will ensure that the coordinator's work is traceable and provide an adequate system for sharing information, knowledge and experience in anti-trafficking efforts.
	Add more functions to the "Vulnerability Assessment" app (so that it is useful in practice and purposeful).
	Organize online classes for children staying in safe houses, for example through the Moodle learning management system used by BiH Civil Service Agency and the Ministry of Security of BiH.
	Emergency accommodation needs to be regulated in all cantons, BD and RS. This accommodation is provided in the first 72 hours of victim identification (funded by the Ministry of Security of BiH).
	Ensure supervision of the operation of safe houses and the services they provide to users. The relevant victim-focused methodology should be adopted by the Ministry of Security. The Ministry of Security of BiH and competent institutions are responsible for this supervision.
	Create a list of trainings with curricula that must be completed by employees of safe houses.
	Adequately address the problem posed by the demand for services and the use of services that trafficking victims are forced to provide, by planning measures that will be appropriately targeted. (OSCE published a brochure on how to address the demand, and an instruction for prosecutors.). Guidelines for this area need to be officially adopted.
	Intensify work with the private sector with the aim of preventing labor exploitation, and conduct an analysis of critical occupations.
	Create a fund for the reintegration of victims of human trafficking, for instance in cases when children are victims of human trafficking
	Introduce human trafficking discussions during home room classes in schools, including instructions on how to identify victims of human trafficking. Train teaching staff on how to recognize potential human trafficking and what to do.

