

**Report of the German delegation for the conference of Santa Marta Group 2018
(Bundeskriminalamt, German Bishops' Conference, SOLWODI)**

The situation in Germany

The official case numbers in the field of human trafficking have not significantly changed in the last few years. Each year, the police complete approximately 400 investigations dealing mainly with human trafficking for sexual exploitation. The victims of this form of human trafficking are almost exclusively prostitutes from Germany, Romania, Bulgaria and Nigeria, who are exploited by criminal groups. The German authorities assume, however, that a very large number of cases involving sexual exploitation and forced labour still go unreported because only very few victims cooperate with law enforcement.

The suppression of human trafficking and exploitation was an important part of the targets listed in the coalition contract of the governing parties in the last legislative period of the Federal Government in Germany (2013-2017). As a result, there have been significant developments in this area.

Since late 2016, the offences linked with human trafficking have been redefined and adapted to the terms of the EU Directive 2011/36/EU. Human trafficking (recruitment, transport etc.) for purposes of exploitation has become an offence in its own right. The different forms of exploitation in turn have been regulated as individual offences so that forced prostitution, forced labour and the many forms of labour exploitation are subject to punishment. On 1 July 2017, a comprehensive Act on the Protection of Prostitutes entered into force, which regulates legal prostitution in Germany by compulsory registration, legal requirements and other means of control. It is hoped that the law will also contribute to suppressing human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Initiatives of the Federal Criminal Police

The German police – who regard the implementation of the above stipulations as an important step towards a more effective suppression of human trafficking – played a key role in getting both legislative initiatives started.

The Bundeskriminalamt (BKA, Federal Criminal Police Office) was significantly involved in a cooperation concept for “protection and support in the fight against child trafficking and exploitation”, which was developed on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and contains numerous recommendations for cooperation between youth welfare offices, police, counselling services and other players dealing with the identification and protection of the victims of child trafficking.

Germany (BKA) took the lead in a European project to combat trafficking in human beings at Europol (“ETUTU Project”). This project deals with the fight against Nigerian-dominated human trafficking and is an outstanding example of successful cooperation within the framework of the so-called “Policy Cycle” of the European Union. In the past four years, more than 160 investigations have been conducted and more than 500 potential victims have been identified. At the meeting of the Santa Marta Group in Rome in 2016 Nigerian human trafficking was discussed several times and a contact between the SMG and the “ETUTU Project” seemed sensible. During the meeting on 28/29 March 2017 in Vienna, the BKA officials presented the Santa Marta Group to the other participants of the “ETUTU Project”. With this first step, the BKA enabled the project participants to establish direct national contact with the SMG representatives.

The Church’s commitment to combatting human trafficking

In Germany, a crucial pillar of the Church’s activities in this field is providing direct assistance to the victims of human trafficking, forced prostitution and labour exploitation. The Church’s advice centres for victims of human trafficking, and for victims of trafficking in women in particular, are operated by the German Caritas Association and the Caritas specialist associations “Women’s Catholic Social Service” (SkF), “IN VIA – Catholic Association for Social Work with Girls and Women” and SOLWODI (for more information on the latter, see below).

The international aid agencies of the Catholic Church in Germany also put a focus on projects against human trafficking and labour exploitation. Misereror and Missio, for instance, collaborate with the Philippine Catholic NGO “Peoples’ Recovery, Empowerment and Development Assistance” (PREDA), which gives aid to children who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. The German Missionary Childhood Association “The Star Singers” supports aid programs for victims of human trafficking in Nepal. And the Renovabis Solidarity Initiative with Eastern Europe (together with other partner organisations) organises every year a conference which aims at contributing to the suppression of trafficking in women.

At the initiative of the Commission for Migration of the German Bishops’ Conference, Catholic organisations in Germany which are involved in the fight against human trafficking joined in 2014 to form the “Working Group on Human Trafficking”. In addition to the Secretariat of the German Bishops’ Conference and the Catholic Liaison Office in Berlin, the German Caritas Association, the German Commission for Justice and Peace, Renovabis, SOLWODI and IN VIA are represented in the working group. The Stuttgart Women’s Information Centre, which is funded by the Evangelical Church’s Diakonie, adds an ecumenical perspective. The working group enables the participating organisations to coordinate their activities in combatting human trafficking and supporting the victims of human trafficking.

The president of the Commission for Migration, Archbishop Dr Stefan Heße (Hamburg), who participated in the conference of the Santa Marta Group in 2016, has on several occasions called for a victim-centred approach in combatting human trafficking. Moreover, he has encouraged more cooperation and exchange on the issue of human trafficking between police representatives, Catholic charity organisations and foreign-language missions.

A further important area is the active collaboration of Church stakeholders in various national and regional networks and bodies aimed at fighting human trafficking. Catholic organisations are, for example, active in the Federal Working Group on Trafficking in Human Beings, in the Federal Working Group on Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Labour Exploitation, in the KOK (Federal Network and Coordination Office against Human Trafficking) and in the Bavarian “Alliance against Trafficking in Women”.

A special focus on the work done by SOLWODI

Among the German participants in the Santa Marta Group conference there is also a woman religious who is active in SOLWODI (Solidarity with Women in Distress). The organisation brings together Catholic sisters and committed professional lay women and works at the grassroots level as a low-threshold service provider for victims of trafficking and gender-based violence. Moreover, it is active in the fields of advocacy, lobbying, awareness raising, prevention and training of professionals and other stakeholders. SOLWODI works at the interface between migration and human trafficking. In this grey area, the sisters and lay women identify and rescue hundreds of victims of trafficking every year. The majority of these victims are not covered by the official statistics.

Several dioceses and religious congregations as well as other Catholic organisations (e.g., Renovabis, Caritas Germany, the Jesuit Refugee Service, the Catholic Women’s Association KDFB and the Bonifatiuswerk) cooperate with SOLWODI and sustain its work in many ways. SOLWODI has been able to create trustworthy networks at local, national and international levels. The organisation is also involved in projects which support the safe return of victims and their reintegration and rehabilitation through interest-free microloans or professional training. An excellent example of cooperation in this area has been the work with the COSUDOW Sisters in Nigeria. In November 2017 SOLWODI participated in the summit for Women Judges and Prosecutors on Human Trafficking and Organized Crime hosted by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

Last year SOLWODI gave a special focus to training “special case officers” of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) as well as social workers in open reception centres. As a result of the conference of the Santa Marta Group in 2016 SOLWODI has started to train chaplains of hospitals and prisons. This cooperation, which aims at identifying more

victims and strengthening the joint commitment of Catholic organisations at the grassroots level, will be continued.

Cooperation between police and Church

The cooperation between the German Bishops' Conference and the Bundeskriminalamt was intensified last year. Among other activities, representatives of the Secretariat of the German Bishops' Conference and of the Catholic Liaison Office in Berlin participated in meetings on the suppression of human trafficking at the Bundeskriminalamt and have become an important part of the BKA's cooperation network. Both sides regularly update one another on important developments.

In May 2017, the German Bishops' Conference and the Bundeskriminalamt organised a workshop on the issue of human trafficking and labour exploitation with representatives of the Catholic foreign-language missions in Germany. The idea was to raise awareness among pastors and other persons responsible for the pastoral care of foreigners, to inform them about recent legislative developments, to acquaint them with the Santa Marta Group and to explore further ways of cooperation.

During the last three years, the German Bundeskriminalamt, the Austrian Federal Criminal Police and SOLWODI have cooperated with German and Austrian universities in a research project on "prevention and intervention of sex trafficking" (PRIMSA).

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