

 *If you speak up,
I will join!*

Regional Platform supporting the empowerment and human rights of survivors of trafficking and sexual exploitation:



The main aim of the project and Platform “If you speak up, I will join” is to strengthen the voice of survivors of human trafficking and sexual exploitation with a special focus on young survivors, and the children of survivors. The project targets survivors in the Baltic Sea Region, and in wider Europe, aspiring to make the societies aware of the brutality behind trafficking and exploitation while providing survivor centric support to empower those involved.

Survivors have exited a victim situation of exploitation with its loss of freedom, control, dignity, and trust. Survivors must deal with the trauma, their rights, safety, and a new beginning. All at the same time. It is a long journey. Many were trafficked as children and young persons and both women and men may fall prey to traffickers and exploiters.

Organisations and institutions cooperating with survivors in the Baltic Sea Region of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden took part in the first phase of the project, which was concluded with the development of a [Survivors Manifest](#) and a [webinar](#) in June 2020. For more information, please visit the [Platform](#). These activities were organised by ECPAT Norway, the Swedish Platform Civil Society Against Human Trafficking, Centrs Marta (Latvia) and Galaxy charity fund (Russia). It was funded by the CBSS Project Support Facility.

The first phase of the project was a great success, showing the importance of engaging, involving and listening to survivors. The project emphasised the journey of survivors and their children to a new start in life based on their human rights while honouring resilience and empowerment. Methods were identified for survivors to deal with the challenges they face and to interact with others in the same situation. Survivors took part in the development of the project and the Survivors Manifest lists a range of recommendations to support the social inclusion of survivors and their participation at every level of society.



Second phase of “If you speak up, I will join”



The ongoing second phase of the project is elaborating on the results from the first phase and aims to be innovative by including survivors in a structured way preparing for social inclusion and trauma sensitive integration. The project is divided into 3 parts; increasing and emphasising information sharing and strategising amongst survivors, documenting good and innovative practices among services, organisations and survivors and lastly by monitoring and evaluating how law and policies are empowering and benefitting survivors.

The second phase will seek new funding and partnerships to strengthen the Platform “If you speak up, I will join” as a forum for survivors of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. In this second phase the project will continue its investigation of the details surrounding the trafficking situation, how the organizations and institutions have adapted and what is needed to further improve services and support. As good practices will be documented there will be many examples to further update, inspire and promote the better ways of meeting the needs of survivors and create spaces for their voices to be included in national level discussions.

Organisations in Norway, Sweden and Denmark have, regardless of external funding, continued to collaborate including with organisations in other countries in Europe. Staff and volunteers, which also includes survivors, have discussed the current situation and ways forward. It is a common understanding among the partners that the momentum should not be lost, rather it must be strengthened as it is crucial that survivors are included at every level for societies to act on their human rights commitments.

Countries in the Baltic Sea region, and in wider Europe, have laws and regulations to protect victims of human trafficking but too few victims are identified. Traffickers manipulate victims and the system, and there are many barriers preventing victims from escaping exploitation. Additionally, human trafficking is an area where criminal law, immigration law and human rights intersect, and the long-term protection and social inclusion of survivors has become a political issue. Organizations, institutions, and public services have over the years gained knowledge and developed methods for identifying victims, they have given support, and offered platforms for survivors to voice their concerns, share their expertise and become champions for others. Some survivors have built their own organizations and platforms.

Economic and political situations, with challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, are factors influencing the situation for survivors and cooperating professionals. Covid-19 has a special negative effect for survivors who have been given support and who are waiting

to start a new life and integrate. However, due to Covid-19 they must isolate, and the labour market is more closed than ever for them. Trauma treatment is also affected by the isolation.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 crisis has placed more people at risk of trafficking and exploitation while also introducing new hurdles restricting the opportunities for victims and survivors to be seen and heard. In contrast, and irrespective of any external situation, there is currently significant learning available to help identify more victims. This can occur by strengthening outreach activities in the streets, in workplaces, in hotels, in prisons and asylum centers. Educating those working in these settings and the survivors may lead to a snowball effect in identifying more victims. Additionally, close cooperation and trust is needed among all sectors including policymakers, professionals, private sector, and survivors. Ongoing reflections and evaluations are necessary to monitor changes in the trafficking chain, the situation of the victims and of national and local responses to ensure the safety of victims and survivors. It is also important to increase the investigations and follow-up of the technological tools used by the traffickers. Political will is of utmost importance in protecting survivors and resourcing this field.



1. Survivors making an impact

A ground-breaking initiative was launched in January 2021 with the establishment of the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Board (ISTAC), consisting of 21 leading survivors of human trafficking. ISTAC will assist the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to implement their human dimension commitments. By initiating the Advisory Board, ODIHR underlines the importance of promoting the voices of survivors in all matters related to combating trafficking. Thus, representatives from the 57 OSCE participating States, which covers North America, Europe, South Caucasus, Central Asia, and Mongolia, will be involved in the exchange of information with survivors of trafficking, other international experts and civil society representatives to ensure a human-rights based and survivor-centred approach in all anti-trafficking efforts.

ISTAC has members from several countries in the Baltic Sea region such as Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, and Russia in addition to members from other countries in Europe such as France, Ireland, Netherlands, Spain, and the UK. A close cooperation with ISTAC is expected to encourage other survivor-led or supported initiatives in the region strengthened by the second phase of this regional project: “If you speak up - I will join”. As this project is already collaborating with key stakeholders in other countries in the Baltic Sea region and in the wider Europe, it will contribute to a stronger base, providing more cooperation and increased recognition of the vital role of survivors.

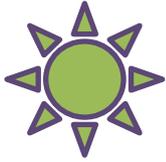
Increasingly, survivors have been included as staff and volunteers in public services and civil society organisations to identify victims and support survivors. Survivors have many skills; they know the trafficking field and they can more easily communicate with victims based upon similarities in cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Some organisations have also enabled platforms for survivors to communicate in-between themselves and some

have chosen to become national champions and spokespersons. Research shows that survivor involvement is important for developing relevant and effective methodologies and for the individual survivor to internalise that change is possible. Patience and self-appreciation are regarded as the main key to change as change ultimately is dependent on the choices a person makes.

Services work better when they have a long-term perspective in supporting each survivor within their specific circumstances to achieve a direct improvement of their situation and a durable solution. Building trust, capacity, skills, and knowledge are key components for the survivor to feel empowered enough to change their life for the better. Survivors are much more than victims of a crime and their trauma; they are persons with potential and authenticity and most move on with the correct support. However, many prefer to keep their new life low key as ordinary citizens and do not choose to become spokespersons.

Activities to strengthen the impact of survivors:

- Establish and sustain cooperation with ISTAC by sharing information about survivors who are active as spokespersons in different countries and about services and organisations promoting survivor involvement.
- Inspire services and organisations at national level in the Baltic Sea region to involve survivors in identifying and empowering other victims in which they are paid for their expertise.
- Through digital platforms conduct information sharing and the mapping of expertise and initiatives in the region.
- Support the establishment of survivor networks, emphasizing personal journeys and how to inspire each other through chat forums and mentor systems.
- Ensure the ongoing support from services and professionals to each survivor to establish trust and to give relevant guidance and support.
- Support empowerment activities with survivors to express personal experiences and visions through different art forms such as painting, dance, drama, and poetry. Encourage innovative cooperation with established settings at national and local level to exhibit and perform including the commercial scene.
- Support empowerment and therapeutic activities with animals, such as with horses and dogs, to re-establish a sense of bodily stability, peace, and communication with other beings.
- Encourage the establishment of safe meeting places where survivors can choose to take part in running the place together with representatives/staff of organisations, services, and communities. Such places may function in the same way as when people are going to work; a fixed place to go to, a place to meet people they know and to take part in daily tasks. Such places must ongoing be open to change depending on who will use them and be open for all to influence their everyday life in a collective daily setting.
- Support survivors who want to develop their own initiatives with training in running organisations and in formulating solutions and suggestions to the wider public.
- Advocacy directed towards policymakers, professionals, private sector, and survivors to implement the Survivors Manifest.



2. Documentation of good practices

To develop a method or intervention into a good practice takes time and effort. A good practice is generally defined as having evidence of effectiveness in small-scale interventions, with the potential of implementing the practices elsewhere. Indicators of good practice include demonstration of positive outcomes among individual survivors and groups of survivors, and documentation and evaluation of these positive outcomes. Furthermore, it is necessary that material, training sessions and resources have been developed to sustain the good practice.

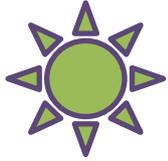
For a practice to be relevant to a diverse group of survivors there is a need to improve access to and quality of care, and increase positive outcomes across a range of communities, with special consideration of intersectional inequalities faced by certain groups because of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or other important factors. Additionally, it is important to identify risk situations for victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in childhoods. The situation for children of survivors needs to be given appropriate attention. Lastly, human trafficking occurs in other forms as well as sexual exploitation: victims being exploited in labour situations including in households and in forced marriage and victims are also coerced into criminality and forced to beg. Approaches can be enriched by identifying new service delivery practices defined by the diverse groups of survivors using evaluations to improve outcomes and reduce disparities.

Documenting good practices and understanding their development and implementation is especially interesting in this second phase of the project. The contributing role of survivors and their children is of key importance. Feedback and evaluation are also important; from contributing parties such as the survivors, the civil society organisations, private sector and national institutions and authorities. Other important factors to be described will be the role of financial and human resources, relevant approaches, and teamwork.

The aim of the documentation is to strengthen communication and cooperation among survivors, organisations and institutions by identifying relevant good practices to be used in a local context and to ensure an accessible knowledge bank. A system to include regular updates of the good practices is also to be built into the Platform.

Information collected for the knowledge bank:

- Name of organisation/institution, website
- Main mission, activities, approaches and target group
- Material, training sessions and resources that have been developed
- Access to services for diverse groups of survivors from a range of exploitative situations
- Positive outcomes among individual survivors and groups of survivors
- Identifying the participation of survivors and their children. How have they been heard and included in the process of developing the good practice?
- Identifying the role of civil society organisations, private sector and national institutions and authorities
- Success factors related to the positive outcomes.
- Identifying the role of financial and human resources and teamwork
- Main challenges for survivors and children of survivors.



3. What happens next?

The Survivors Manifest stress in line with this second phase of the project: “If you speak up, I will join”, the need to transition from short-term interventions to social inclusion. Initiatives and activities by national authorities and regional institutions will thus be evaluated according to advances in the follow-up of their human rights obligations.

Social inclusion is the opposite of social exclusion, the latter being one of the main root causes of trafficking. Furthermore, it refers to the objective of survivors’ full participation in society. At the same time, it conveys the idea of a process, requiring innovative and transformative projects and activities such as skill acquisition, labour market opportunities and job creation. Social inclusion should be the main goal of the anti-trafficking action when designing and implementing protection measures.

Many victims and survivors are returned to a third country or to their home country. Most are returned without a monitoring of their adjustment, while some to a limited degree have received support by the International Organization for Migration and from other organisations. There are countless examples of survivors having been re-trafficked after return, ended up in prostitution or they have begun taking drugs and even committed suicide. Supporting survivors includes safeguarding and monitoring of their safety after return. It should also be part of a human commitment when someone has been victimized on the territory of a state.

Progress in aligning policies, laws and procedures with the social inclusion standards:

- Have survivors been included on a voluntary basis in the design, implementation and evaluation of anti-trafficking interventions aimed at social inclusion?
- Have national and local level services and organisations working in the interests of survivors been resourced? Are they consulted on a regular basis when policies are developed?
- Is access to services and residence status disconnected from the criminal proceedings?
- Has legislation been implemented to ensure survivors the right to social support and compensation?
- Has training been organised for teachers, school health personnel, asylum staff, prison staff and social workers on how to meet and assist survivors and their children? Have survivors received such training to be effective in identifying and supporting other survivors?
- Have procedures been developed to ensure that victims of trafficking are not prosecuted for irregular entry or unlawful activities when it is part of the trafficking scheme? Is detention of children banned?
- Have safeguards been provided in national policies to protect children from all forms of abuse and exploitation to prevent human trafficking and sexual exploitation?
- Have policies and legislation been adopted to ensure safe residence, education and social welfare for children of survivors of human trafficking?

- Have guidelines been developed to support the process of psycho-social adjustment and recovery?
- Civil society organisations and the private sector are important partners in ensuring services to victims and survivors. Are they included and monitored as part of national level activities to counter human trafficking?
- Are monitoring mechanisms in place after survivors have accessed services to evaluate to what extent their social inclusion process has been successful?
- Are policies and routines in place to ensure the safe return of survivors to a third country or to the country of origin?

