



Regional guiding principles

The Nordic Baltic pilot project aims to act as a starting point for long-term change in the region, developing victim-centred and durable models for support and reintegration of women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

For this aim, national coordinating teams and a regional Nordic Baltic inter-agency Network have been set up. The regional network, which brings together the national coordinating teams from all 8 Nordic and Baltic countries, includes public agencies and NGOs from all Nordic and Baltic countries who work with, support and protect women victims of trafficking. The following principles were outlined at the first meeting of the Nordic Baltic Network (Riga, 18-20 June 2006).

1) Overarching principles

- Protecting the rights and safety of women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (VOT) is the first and foremost priority of all cooperative measures undertaken.
- The work will be developed building upon human rights standards and international commitments contained within the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005) and UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000).
- All actors in the Nordic Baltic regional network will ensure that the dignity, integrity, privacy, and identity of women VOT are protected throughout the process of assistance and support. The network will work to empower VOT and respect their decisions.
- A gender perspective acknowledging the unequal power balance between women and men will inform all work.
- The network considers sex trafficking, and other forms of sexual exploitation, as forms of violence against women.
- The network agrees that the racism inherent in trafficking in women and sexual exploitation must be addressed.
- Demand reduction is essential to reduce trafficking in women for sexual exploitation, and the network will ensure that the responsibility of the sex buyers is addressed.
- The network will dedicate its efforts to assist and protect women VOT, and work with a reasonable belief approach in the identification process in line with the UN Protocol.

- The network is committed to work in a collaborative, multidisciplinary way, involving all relevant actors from government and civil society, and in particular women's organisations.
- The network will work to ensure that there is a sufficient legal basis for adequate victim assistance, support, protection and safe returns for women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in all Nordic and Baltic countries.
- Financing for assistance and support to women VOT must be ensured and be provided on a long-term (secure) basis.
- The Regional network will build upon, and is committed to support its members in the different national level efforts to improve and develop assistance and support activities for women VOT.
- The network will work to ensure that the activities of the Nordic Baltic network become core funded activity of all governments in the region also after the end of the pilot project period ends in 2008.

2) Assistance and support to women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation

- The Nordic and Baltic countries have an obligation to ensure access to justice, and a full range of human rights/victim-centred services and support measures for women VOT (due diligence principle).
- The Network will support the development of the highest quality specialised services. Close collaboration between different actors (NGOs and government agencies) is essential, to achieve the best possible services and support to women VOT.
- All victims, regardless of status of any legal case or the willingness to act as a witness in criminal proceedings, must be entitled to assistance.
- Each VOT will have different needs and experiences. Support and protection must be tailored individually to these.
- It is important that women VOT receive sufficient support to integrate into the host country, when this is where they choose to remain.
- Services and support will be provided using a holistic approach, and ensuring a professional attitude to women victims: giving priority to the interest of the women; confidentiality for victims; and non-judgemental attitudes.
- Women VOT have the right to access to a full range of victim-centred services and support measures in all the Nordic and Baltic countries. Access to health services is essential and an absolute right.
- Specialised shelters need to be established, alongside flats with confidential addresses for women VOT.

- The network recognises that there are parallels between service provision for women victims of sexual violence and women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.
- An important part of service and support work to women VOT is to provide real possibilities for women to break out from prostitution. More financial resources are needed in order to do this work successfully.
- In order to develop appropriate responses and support measures, service providing NGOs must be increasingly resourced and their expertise acknowledged.
- Referral routes and identification skills in police, migration officers, customs, etc. must be developed.

3) Returns / Resettlement – What is “safe”?

- Returns of women victims of trafficking must all aim to be voluntary.
- The Network will work towards developing a formalised inter-regional referral system, including the possibility for settlement in a third country.
- All returns will be planned with a receiving service structure in the country of return, supported financially by the country where the victimisation has taken place, in a process that ensures the provision of all necessary assistance to the women VOT.
- The Network will work to ensure that a risk assessment and needs assessment are carried out in advance of any return.
- States will ensure finance for safe returns and assistance for all trafficked women.
- Financial assistance for women is an essential component of a return process, preventing re-trafficking and contributing to build sustainable futures for women VOT that return to their home countries.