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## THE SCOPE OF THE CRIMINAL OFFENSE “HUMAN TRAFFICKING” IN REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

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There has never been a more important moment to engage the fight for freedom. Now, more than ever, we must collectively commit to stopping human traffickers and protecting victims. We will not be deterred from dismantling this crime down to its very foundations and ensuring the protection of future generations [11]. Human trafficking<sup>1</sup> has become a global problem worldwide, and it doesn't matter where you are. That is why it is important to understand the scope of the criminal offense human trafficking in legislation of Latvia. The EU covers over 4 million km<sup>2</sup> and has 446 million inhabitants [4], but at the same time the population of Latvia is only 1,907 million [4] what makes 0,428% from all EU countries. A significant number is still registered in Latvia on trafficking in person cases.

**Material and methods.** This research is based on international and supranational understanding what trafficking in person is, that is why the main approach is based on comparative research methods. For analysing criminal offenses in Latvia, is used qualitative empirical approaches (qualitative

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<sup>1</sup> In some sources the legislator is using the concept “trafficking in person” or “trafficking of human beings”. So in this research for the sake of uniformity authors are using concept “human trafficking”, reserving rights to refer and extend it to the other concepts mentioned above.

empirical research method). Qualitative empirical approaches to law have been discussed in detail to understand the position of victims in criminal proceedings and in order to understand the effects of legal arrangements for stakeholders in social aspects. And more, it is extremely important to establish paradigms about integrity of national laws and regulations in international agreements, such as Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation Of The Prostitution Of Others [9] and Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Europe Union [2], etc. Critical analysis of regulatory enactments gives a clear view on legal realism. So, this triangulation is made in order to reinforce internal and external validity of this research.

### **Findings and their discussion.**

1. The main causes of human trafficking must mention globalization of the economy and the social inequalities that prevail among the world's population. Taking into account the situation in Latvia, girls and young women with secondary education or secondary unfinished and without an occupation, single mothers, the homeless could be at risk group in human trafficking, but it is also important to note that all citizens are at certain risk, especially those who in search of work given abroad. From the point of view of human trafficking in Latvia, it can be as the country of origin of the victims of human trafficking, as the country of transit and the country of destination [1].

The current legislation on trafficking in persons in Latvia covers all forms of trafficking indicated in the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol. Latvia uses both a general human trafficking law and a law against “sending a person for sexual exploitation” to prosecute cases of trafficking in persons [8p. 23].

Criminal liability in Republic of Latvia is mentioned in Criminal Law Section 154.<sup>1</sup> [6] but meaning of Human Trafficking is mentioned in Criminal Law Section 154.<sup>1</sup> [6] this responsibility is defined by Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic In Persons And of the Exploitation of the Prostitution Of Others [9], United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime [12] especially Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children [7], supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime[12], Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings [3] as well as a number of other international agreements and legal acts of the Council of Europe.

2. Human trafficking, according to Republic of Latvia legislation, includes trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labour, to commit criminal offences, holding in servitude and the removal of organs and tissues [6]. In Latvia this criminal offence is recognized to be especially serious crime, because it is directed against personal liberty, honour and dignity. The protection of personal liberty, honour and dignity are strengthened in international documents of human rights, so that means - human trafficking is also violation of human rights.

Human trafficking is a hidden and complex crime. Crime, which victims most often remain invisible to the public, who themselves are often unaware that

they have been deceived or coerced, that they have been exploited by force, deception or threats and blackmail and have become victims of human trafficking. Fear, shame and guilt are the reasons why victims do not report crimes and do not seek help. Victims often lack the encouragement or necessary information about their rights, where to go and get help. To mark the European Union Day against Trafficking in Human Beings, the European Union Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) and European countries launched an anti-trafficking campaign on 17 October 2019, the main aim of which is to reach people who may be victims of trafficking in need. support, assistance and protection [10]. Thus, reflect the fact that the issue of human trafficking is a day-to-day issue of legal policy.

3. According to Criminal law, to identify human trafficking as a criminal offence, it is necessary to establish qualifying features - actions have been committed by using violence or threats or by means of deceit, or by taking advantage of the dependence of the person on the offender or of his or her state of vulnerability or helplessness, or he or she is material dependent from offender.

The fact that Latvia, from the point of view of human trafficking, can be described as a country of destination, show information in social networks - in November 2020 detained an organized group (Latvian bakery company "ADUGS") on suspicion of human trafficking, laundering of criminally obtained capital, and causing bodily harm. Its members have exploited foreign workers at the baked goods company, using their helplessness, forcing them into material dependency, making threats and harming them physically. During the investigation, it was found out that up to 10 third-country nationals have been exploited for a long-time in this company, taking advantage of their vulnerability, not paying them a salary for their work in full and driving them into a disproportionately large debt. Workers have been deprived of their passports, subjected to physical violence and threatened with deportation if they do not comply with all the requirements of the criminal group. All people had legal work permits [13].

This case shows, that Latvian legislation, mostly in accordance with Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime Article 3, subparagraph a) [7], has been adapted to meet modern requirements for the scope of human trafficking. As we can see in the mentioned case in bakery company "ADUGS", there were no trafficking elements, criminal offence has been established according to other elements, such as foreign workers' helplessness, forcing them into material dependency, making threats and harming them physically. That is why we can confidently say that the understanding and scope of human trafficking is still growing. It is hard to predict how far the scope of human trafficking can develop in globalization period, but it marks a new horizon for research on social factors in

the world. Especially coronavirus is a huge challenge in scope of human trafficking, on one hand, and, in dynamics of transnational organized crimes activities, on other hand.

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### THE PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE AS AN ANTI-CORRUPTION BODY

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One of the actual problems of our time for all states is corruption-related crimes. Corruption manifests in a wide variety of actions of officials and related actions of individuals and legal entities who want to obtain public and private services illegally today. The public danger of corruption is very high, because it is a serious social problem that negatively affects economic development, harms