

LITHUANIA BETTER AT FIGHTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING THAN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, SAYS US REPORT ("15MIN.LT/EN", 20-06-2012)

Lithuania is better at fighting human trafficking than neighboring Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, and Russia and the situation improved significantly last year, the United States Department of State claims in a report.

Latvia and Estonia are among Tier 2 countries that do not comply with minimum standards. EU member states Portugal, Greece, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria were also criticized in the report, while Russia and Belarus were rated even worse.

"The Government of Lithuania fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. In 2011, the Lithuanian government doubled its victim identifications, tripled its anti-trafficking investigations, and ensured that all convicted trafficking offenders were sentenced to time in prison," the report, published on Tuesday, reads.

21 pre-trial investigations into human trafficking were launched in Lithuania last year, compared to 7 in 2010.

According to the State Department, Lithuania has significantly increased funding for victim care - USD 60,000 (LTL 163,800) were provided to NGOs administering care to victims of trafficking in 2011, up from USD 35,000 (LTL 95,500) in 2010. Nevertheless, funding remained low in the light of the extent of human trafficking in Lithuania, the report says.

The Lithuanian government identified 45 trafficking victims during the reporting period, more than double the 22 victims of trafficking identified in 2010.

The government sustained partnerships with NGOs through joint organization of approximately 35 anti-trafficking events, including seminars and public lectures, involving over 400 specialists. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized anti-trafficking training for 36 consular officials.

Victims' reluctance to cooperate with law enforcement is mentioned as one of the main problems in fighting human trafficking.

The authors of the reports also say that while specialized units in Lithuania were skilled in trafficking investigations, law enforcement officers and investigators in rural areas sometimes lacked experience in investigating trafficking cases and identifying trafficking victims. Moreover, law enforcement officers inconsistently understood that third-party involvement in child prostitution should be prosecuted under the trafficking statute.

Skaitykite daugiau: <http://www.15min.lt/en/article/in-lithuania/lithuania-better-at-fighting-human-trafficking-than-neighboring-countries-says-us-report-525-227871#ixzz21RB0wYQZ>