

# Conclusions

In its analysis of the sexual exploitation of people originating from Latin America, Myria identified a number of good practices, but also areas for improvement. It has reviewed them and made a number of recommendations.

In the course of its investigation, Myria found that Latin American sex workers (SW) often operate in a **grey zone**. In many cases, SWs come to work willingly in the Belgian sex industry because it is more lucrative than in their country of origin. In this context, they are sometimes offered services by facilitators who, in some cases, may be linked to human trafficking. Furthermore, high mobility and private sex work are characteristic of Latin American SWs in general. It is therefore often difficult, but important, to distinguish sex work from situations involving the trafficking of victims originating from Latin America.

**Detecting victims, identifying suspects and prosecuting perpetrators is a difficult task** for the police, not least because of the hidden nature of the phenomenon, the constant mobility of Latin American SWs, and the fact that they rarely consider themselves as victims. Myria stresses the need to pay greater attention to the phenomenon of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation of Latin Americans in **police training**, to strengthen **police workforces** and to develop more **local police teams specialised** in this domain. Within a local police force in Brussels, a THB-Prostitution section carries out **proactive work** by means of virtual patrols and checks, making it an example of good practice. It is also necessary to build victims' trust in the authorities in order to reduce the dark figure. In this respect, recruiting police officers who speak the language of the target group and have an affinity with the victims' culture is one way of gaining their trust. Myria points out that **the way victims are treated in police cells** can have a significant impact on their **level of trust**. The role of organisations that support SWs is also essential in order to reach these people whose activities mainly take place in private settings.

**Only a small number of victims from Latin America wish to enter or remain in the status.** This is mainly due to economic reasons, given that their income is limited once they stop the sex work, as well as to the itinerancy of Latin American SWs, who rarely wish to benefit from a (permanent) residence status in Belgium. It is necessary, particularly through preventive measures, to **increase information and awareness among this group, as well as their resilience**. One good practice was mentioned in an interview conducted by Myria with field organisations supporting SWs: **discussion groups** are regularly organised, in the presence of (former) SWs, to inform them about the existence of exploitative situations and specialised assistance<sup>198</sup>.

The analysis of the phenomenon shows that the reality of **trans Latin Americans** is still largely unknown to the various players involved. It would be useful to **raise awareness of the situation of trans Latin American victims among the police and the judiciary, and in the specialised reception centres for victims of trafficking**, in order to draw more attention to the issue and strengthen their relationship of trust with the authorities. In one case, Myria noted positively that the **presence of a member of staff from a centre specialising in the reception of trafficking victims during a police interview** helped to win the trust of a Latin American trans victim and obtain their statement. Another example of good practice is the fact that the vice section of a local police force gave the trans person a **choice over the gender of the person conducting the body search**<sup>199</sup>.

Given the increase in the number of Latin American SWs, and the associated risks of exploitation, both nationally and internationally, as well as their itinerancy, strengthening **international collaboration** when it comes to exploitation is essential.

<sup>198</sup> Also see the external contribution of these field organisations at the end of this focus.

<sup>199</sup> See Part 2, Chapter 2, point 1.3.4.

In the Netherlands, national cooperation takes the form of an **inter-regional investigation** by the Coordination Point for Unitary Interventions against Trafficking in Human Beings (CEMI)<sup>200</sup>, providing an overview of the phenomenon, which is a good practice. In Belgium, DJSOC (Central Directorate for Combatting Serious and Organised Crime) within the federal judicial police (FJP), plays a similar role at police level. The organisation of the sexual exploitation of people from Latin America generally takes place within the context of **organised international networks**. **Financial investigations** make it possible to identify the financial flows and these networks, which may be linked to other criminal activities, and to dismantle them using the strategy of financial draining. Myria notes a good example of this practice in a case in which the police used the **CARIN network**<sup>201</sup> to gather information on perpetrators in Portugal and Brazil, which revealed the use of money laundering and links with the construction sector.

Generally speaking, the Latin American community in Europe, including SWs, is very active on social media, **internet platforms** and instant messaging apps. As a result, investigations carried out by **the police or the public prosecutor's office** into acts of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation involving this group of people should inevitably include searches on internet platforms, which requires **collaboration** with the latter. Myria points out that a **certain internet platform dedicated to advertising prostitution is already collaborating with the police**, by reporting problematic situations identified in adverts and by forwarding client reports, which constitutes good practice in this area. It would be worthwhile **ensuring that this good practice is disseminated within all police services**, at both local and regional level, and to strengthen this **collaboration with other internet platforms** concerned by the phenomenon.

<sup>200</sup> Free translation of "Coördinatiepunt Eenheidsoverstijgende Mensenhandel Interventies". On this subject, see the Dutch National Rapporteur's external contribution the at the end of this focus.

<sup>201</sup> *Camden Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network*. See Part 2, Chapter 2, point 1.2.4.