Switzerland. The first is the identification of specialists in the area of combating trafficking in human beings at the various official agencies. The second is the network of contacts between them, which is essential for combating trafficking in human beings effectively in a federal state. In conclusion, it may be stated that the institutions established in recent years, namely the creation of the KSM and the institutionalisation of cooperation mechanisms in an increasing number of cantons, have led to significant improvements in combating human trafficking.

This article was prepared by Sebastian Rauber on behalf of, and in close cooperation with, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. A longer version is available online at www.fmreview.org/pdf/swissantitrafficking.pdf. For further information, contact

Tamara Münger, EDA Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Political Division IV, Bundesgasse 32, CH-3003 Bern, Switzerland. Tel: +41 31 32 32867. Email: tamara.muenger@eda.admin.ch

OSCE promoting coordination to fight human trafficking

A growing number of participating States of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have adopted anti-trafficking laws, amended their criminal codes and/or established national coordination mechanisms to address trafficking in human beings. However, a more sophisticated understanding of human trafficking and a victim-centred approach are essential to tackle this horrendous crime and human rights violation.

A central issue is the right of (temporary or permanent) residence for victims in destination countries. Ideally, legal status of residence should be granted irrespective of the victims’ ability or willingness to testify in criminal proceedings. Legal status should also imply access to the labour market and entitlement to state welfare benefits and schemes for the compensation of victims of this crime. After a reflection period of at least 30 days (as laid down in the new Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings’), the authorities should grant a temporary residence permit for at least six months. This should be renewable, with the possibility that victims – if required – may be allowed to permanently remain in the countries of destination.

Victims of trafficking must have the right to refuse to testify, and if they agree to testify, they should be able to do so in a non-confrontational environment. To expose trafficking victims or to force them too early to confront their exploiters may exacerbate trauma. The process of testifying against the trafficker must not re-victimise them but should be an empowering, positive experience through which victims’ rights are protected and promoted.

Child victims of trafficking ought to be automatically granted an extended stay in the country of destination, pending a durable solution. Just as trafficking victims in general, children in particular should never be criminalised for acts arising from a trafficking situation or sent back to their home countries without careful, individualised risk assessment.

Structured and systematic cooperation between law enforcement agencies and NGOs who run victim protection centres has proven effective in the fight against human trafficking. While we must encourage law enforcement and continue to train officers to better identify and refer trafficking victims, we must also significantly strengthen networks of support services so that victims can turn to and access an immediately supportive environment.

Helga Konrad is the OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. For further information, visit www.osce.org/chti or contact Berry A Kralj, Executive Officer, Kärntner Ring 5-7, A-1010 Vienna, Austria. Email: berry.kralj@osce.org

1. www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/trafficking